

BOOK

1

寻秦记

黄易

【黄易精品】

Huang Yi

A STEP INTO
THE PAST

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A STEP INTO THE PAST

BOOK 1

(Volume 1 to 5)

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The Warring States of China c. 260 BCE



A STEP INTO THE PAST

By: HUANGYI

VOLUME 1

CHAPTER 1

Time Machine

[Translated by JEAN]

SCREECH!

The shrill screeching caused by braking resulted in the friction between the tyres and the road sounded right in front of the city's most popular 'Black Leopard Bar'. The jeep

that belonged to Team seven of the army's special unit, regarded as the best of the best, suddenly stopped.

Amid the cheers and laughter, Xiang Shaolong and his three teammates grabbed the grills and jumped down from the car. After three months of intensive training in body and warfare in the Gobi desert, they finally have three days of leave. If they do not thoroughly enjoy life now, they would be letting down their parents who gave birth to them.

Xiang Shaolong is twenty this year. His skin glowed with a healthy tan because of his long hours under the sun. He may not be considered a handsome young man, but with his height nearing two meters, broad shoulders, trim waist and long legs, firm muscles with not an inch of excess fat, agile and smart eyes, pencil straight nose, perfectly rounded cheekbones, square face, matched with a lazy smile that seems to flirt with women, he definitely has the qualities that will pique the interest of any girl.

Just as they were about to enter, there was chaos and a mess of bodies landed on the ground amidst claps and curses. It was their team mates Xiao Zhang and Man Niu (Stubborn Cow) who came earlier being thrown out of the door and landing in a heap. They were groaning to get up and although this is usually a very simple act, but now to these two top agents of the special unit, it's a very difficult task.

The expression on the four's faces changed and they rushed forward to help the two of them up. Rhino, who has a

growth on his forehead, exclaimed, "How many people?"

This question is very logical. Xiao Zhang and Man Niu, like them, belong to Team Seven Special Unit. They are picked amongst the best in the whole army to receive special training as a crack team, and specialized in handling all kinds of dangerous situations like anti-terrorists missions, entering hostile countries to carry out assassination attempts or saving lives, protecting important political people etc. Their training includes the use of various weapons, unarmed combat, resistance training, survival training, and various spying techniques. In fact the aim is to train them into becoming supermen. Even ten odd brawny men may not be able to harm even a single hair on them.

But since other teams have always been jealous of them, they find it an honor if they are able to take down members of Team 7. So it's quite normal for fights to break out whenever they're on leave and having drinks, but this is the first time that they have actually been thrown out of the door.

Xiao Zhang regained some of his senses, opened his bruised eyes and when he saw it's Xiang Shaolong helping him up, he exclaimed with joy, "Brother Long, go and back us up quickly!"

Everyone in the team addressed Xiang Shaolong as Brother Long, not because he's older, but because he's the sharp shooter of the team, champion of freestyle boxing, and the fittest among them.

Man Niu panted and pointed towards the inside of the bar and said, "It's Team 841's instructor Black Faced Deity, he actually had the guts to harass our ice beauty."

The four of them flew into a rage. Ice beauty Zheng Cuizhi is the secretary of their team's instructor, so how can they allow other teams to touch her when none of them have managed to woo her?

Xiang Shaolong's hands started itching once he thinks about fighting, so he puffed up his chest and shouted, "Help them in and let me show off my skills!"

With that, he led them into the bar.

The spacious bar was filled with smoke and the noises and music deafening. Half of the crowd was from the army or police and foreigners and civilians numbered only about thirty. It was crowded and the mood spirited.

They had just appeared at the door when the bar suddenly became quiet.

The well built and muscular Black Faced Deity and about a dozen of his men was wearing civilian clothing and drinking and laughing with a few sexily clad ladies. Black Faced Deity was holding Ice beauty Zheng Cuizhi by her tiny waist and when she saw Xiang Shaolong, who usually ignored her coming in, she deliberately turned her sultry body towards Black Faced Deity and even kissed his cheek.

Black Faced Deity saw Xiang Shaolong and his face shone. He moved his hands lower towards Zheng Cuizhi's voluptuous

butt and slapped it twice, saying with a smile, "One against one or everyone charge!"

There's an unwritten rule in the army, which is all fights are to be fought only with fists, unless there's some great enmity, or if blinded by rage, they will not use things that can hurt like knives or broken bottles, in case things get out of hand and they get apprehended by the military police.

Xiang Shaolong saw the queen of the bar Zhou Xiangmei leaning against the table and looking at him with a smile and felt a boost of bravado. He replied with a smile, "Against someone like you, it doesn't really matter to me. Up to you."

Everyone in the bar, regardless of male or female, all cheered and added fuel to the flame, the atmosphere reaching a burning high.

Xiao Zhang moved to his side and warned with a low voice, "Be careful! That fellow's extremely good."

Someone shrieked with a strange voice, "Someone's afraid!"

The onlookers watching the show laughed even harder.

Man Niu walked over as well and whispered, "That two men Black Faced Deity are the best two champion boxers at the local martial arts school. They are prepared for a fight today with the intent of making us lose face."

Xiang Shaolong noticed the two murderous looking men long ago. 'Taking note of your surroundings' is the second rule out of the seven in the special task force. The first rule is 'to be well prepared' and the third is 'remain calm'. This is

exactly what he is going to do now. He instructed quietly, "Tell them to stay clear, I'm confident of settling those three alone."

By now Black Faced Deity has removed his jacket and handed it to ice beauty. He took two steps forward and said coldly, "Xiang Shaolong! I've put up with you for a long time. The last time you injured dozens of my men at the Wild Cat Karaoke, today I will settle those old scores with you."

Xiang Shaolong told his five friends to stand back and spread out, and he took two steps forward as well and was within four paces of Black Faced Deity. He called out calmly to the bartender, "Give me some fresh milk, I need to quench my thirst after I deal with this Black Faced Deity."

This sentence immediately caused a roar of laughter from everyone.

Someone from Black Faced Deity's group called out, "This lad is going to use his strength for drinking milk as well."

Black Faced Deity leaned towards the left and made a fake move, while he deviously kicked with his leg, aiming at the position five inches above Xiang Shaolong's calf.

Xiang Shaolong moved to the side and avoided the attack effortlessly.

When the crowd saw that they're finally fighting, they started cheering and adding fuel to fire.

Black Faced Deity roared and rushed forward with the speed of lightning, crouched when he got near and both his fists

struck out towards the chest. Xiang Shaolong took another step back and avoided the enemy's fists.

When the crowd saw that he's only dodging but not retaliating, they jeered. Black Faced Deity's men also ridiculed him loudly.

Black Faced Deity thought that Xiang Shaolong is afraid of him and became even more conceited. He suddenly stuck out his middle finger and taking advantage of his lead, rushed forward and aimed a punch at his nose.

Xiang Shaolong was thinking to himself how good that he's coming. When the fist was only a few inches from his nose, he suddenly stumbled backwards, as if that punch has thrown him far back.

The crowd went mad and started shouting.

Man Niu and the rest naturally knew that he was not hit, and were perplexed why he only dodged but did not attack. That lad stumbled six steps back, leaned back and actually fell into the arms of the queen of the bar Zhou Xiangmei, who was sitting on the chair.

Zhou Xiangmei was so shocked that she screamed.

Black Faced Deity leapt forward like a crazed tiger.

Xiang Shaolong yelled and straightened his body, his right hand taking the chance to touch Zhou Xiangmei's creamy bosom, and sprang up using the strength from his waist. He shot towards Black Faced Deity like a cannon, ignoring the fact that his opponent's fists are clenched and coming down

hard on his back, and his head hit his opponent right on the stomach.

Before Black Faced Deity has a chance to hit Xiang Shaolong, his opponent's head caused his almost 100kg body to stumble back like a toy with an unstoppable force and fell right on to the middle of the dance floor.

The two hundred odd people in the bar gasped in unison. Immediately the place became from being extremely noisy to being extremely quiet, leaving only the speakers at the corners of the bar playing a very groovy song.

Xiang Shaolong was like a ferocious tiger being released and leaped towards Black Faced Deity who is still on the ground.

The two professional boxers who were invited by Black Faced Deity saw that the situation was amiss and both rushed out at the same time, going around Black Faced Deity who is still on the floor and attached Xiang Shaolong while sandwiching him between them.

His friends Man Niu, Xiao Zhang and the rest were all cursing and calling them shameless, but they did not help at all. No one can be more confident of Xiang Shaolong's abilities than them.

The battle ended in the blink of an eye.

Xiang Shaolong dodged a few times and avoided his enemy's attacks and squeezed in between the two of them, elbowed the person on his left under his armpit, his right hand pushing away his enemy's fist and before the man on the left

fell to the ground, he gave two quick knocks with his knee on the person on his right's stomach. Black Faced Deity had just struggled to stand up but Xiang Shaolong has already given him a wicked punch on his nose just as the boxer on his right was kneeling down in pain. Black Face Deity cried out as fresh blood poured out and collapsed onto Cuizhi who was just rushing over and the two of them tumbled down.

Xiao Shaolong laughed heartily, and pointing Black Faced Deity's men, taunted them, "Come! All of you together now."

Man Niu and the rest rushed up, rubbing their fists and palms.

Cuizhi climbed up and shrieked, "Xiang Shaolong! You're good! Just you wait and see!"

Xiang Shaolong can't be bothered with her but walked towards the queen of the bar, Zhou Xiangmei. Pulled her up and walked out of the bar.

Zhou Xiangmei exclaimed, "Where are you taking me?"

Xiang Shaolong carried her up and deposited her on the passenger seat of the jeep and said with a laugh, "Home of course, I don't have enough money to pay the exorbitant price for a hotel room."

"Ring....."

Xiang Shaolong, who is used to strict training, woke up immediately and disentangled himself from Zhou Xiangmei's slender limbs and grabbed the phone.

Cuizhi's clear voice traveled to his ears, "Captain Xiang, you have 15 minutes to wash up, the Ministry of War's armored vehicle is waiting for you at the main door."

Zhou Xiangmei moaned and said, "Baddie! Come quickly!"

Xiang Shaolong rubbed his aching back, caused by the numerous rounds of 'fights' with this seductress, and exclaimed hoarsely, "Are you trying to scare me? Would a fight cause such a big trouble?"

Cuizhi said icily, "Who said it's got anything to do with the fight, it's the Science Institute who wants the fittest among our special task force for an experiment. I saw that you were so brave last night and your stamina was so surprisingly good, so I recommended you to the instructor. The instructor has given his orders!"

Naturally Xiang Shaolong knows that she's making use of the opportunity to take revenge and said with irritation, "But I'm still on leave today!"

Cuizhi laughed, "Oh my Captain Xiang, you only have leave when there's no mission. A soldier belongs to the country 24 hours a day."

Xiang Shaolong can't wait to strangle her, but he sighed instead, "Hai! I was so brave last night, all because of you. Do you really not know or are you just pretending?"

Xiangmei wriggled out from under the blankets naked and asked, "Who are you talking to?"

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly signaled her to keep quiet.

The other end of the line was silent for a moment, before a soft voice said, "You're lying!"

Xiang Shaolong covered Zhou Xiangmei's tiny mouth with one hand, and glibly replied, "Why would I lie to you. I, Xiang Shaolong, think about you day and night, I just did not say it out! Do you know! You..."

Cuizhi interrupted him, "All right! We'll talk about that later! You'll only be a lab mouse for one day maximum. I'll find someone else the next time. Get changed quickly."

"Pak!"

And she hung up.

The armored vehicle stopped outside the main door of the heavily guarded Science Institute and Xiang Shaolong was escorted inside like a prisoner by four soldiers and passed over to the security at the research department. He was immediately brought to a hospital ward filled with medical equipments and after going through a thorough body check-up, the doctor signed the papers with satisfaction and the nurse pushed him out of the room.

Lying on the hospital bed, Xiang Shaolong objected, "I'm not sick, I can walk on my own."

The nurse is obviously very interested in him and smiled as she walked and said, "Be a good boy, I know you're not sick, in fact you're stronger than a bull."

Xiang Shaolong could not change his character and he immediately flirted, "Hey! What's your name and how can I

find you.”

The nurse rolled her eyes at him and did not reply.

Doors opened one by one in front and the nurse pushed him deep into the building until they reached a lift.

8 security guards were standing guard next to the lift door and they took over Xiang Shaolong.

Xiang Shaolong felt a shiver in his heart and wondered what kind of experiment could this be? Why would the laboratory be in an underground cell at the Science Institute?

The lift descended by more than 10 floors before it stopped. Xiang Shaolong was pushed out by the guards and after passing a few heavily guarded doors, came to a spacious hall.

Xiang Shaolong looked around and sat up in shock.

He saw on one end of the 30 meters hall a huge metal object that looked like a iron furnace right in front of him.

All sorts of equipment filled the hall, and it looked like the cabin of a huge spacecraft.

A hundred odd male and female researchers dressed in white coats were busy working with various equipments.

The two sides of the hall were split into two levels. The top level separated by a full length glass. And inside there were countless researchers busy working on many types of unnameable equipment, and some were pointing at him through the glass.

Xiang Shaolong was confused. God! What is this all about?

The serious atmosphere and the huge weaponry are not funny at all.

A male and a female researcher walked to his side, and the man smiled, "I am Professor Fang Ting, she is Professor Xie Zhimei. We're the assistants to the Head Engineer of this Time-Space Project, Director Ma Ke."

Xiang Shaolong stood up and exclaimed, "What is this all about? At least tell me why I'm here!"

The average looking female professor Xie Zhimei who looked like a spinster said seriously, "Don't worry! Everything is safe, as for the details, Director Ma will tell you personally."

Professor Fang Ting added, "It's a soldier's duty to serve the country, Captain Xiang should feel honored to be the first human experiment for the Time-Space Project. Come!"

Xiang Shaolong shook his head and smiled bitterly, and helplessly followed them towards that huge object. Hai! What kind of luck is he having today?

Xiang Shaolong lay down in a human shaped gold box, his hands, legs, waist and neck all secured by straps and became an experiment target at their mercy.

He was just cursing Zheng Cuizhi, thinking of how he will get her after the experiment, how he will take revenge on the bed, when a bespectacled old man with white hair appeared from the top of the box and smiled at him, "I am Director Ma Ke, Captain Xiang, how do you feel?"

Xiang Shaolong snorted coldly, "I feel like animal being sent

to the slaughterhouse, and am still wondering if this slaughterhouse is for pigs or cows.”

Director Ma laughed dryly, “Captain Xiang sure knows how to joke.”

He paused and asked, “Which period of our country’s history are you more familiar with?”

Xiang Shaolong was surprised, “What has this got to do with the experiment?”

Director Ma was displeased and said, “Answer my question first.”

Xiang Shaolong can only blame it on his bad luck, and wanting to end this quickly, he replied after a thought, “I’m not familiar with history, but recently I saw that movie ‘Emperor Qin’, and was really envious of his Epang Palace and his indulgence in life, and I read a few books about the Warring States and Emperor Qin...”

Director Ma interrupted impatiently, “Hey! That’s enough, so it’s the Qin Dynasty, 246BC, the first year Emperor Qin ascended the throne.”

Then he repeated the year into the intercom clipped on his white shirt collar.

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed in shock, “My god! What are you saying?”

Director Ma became excited and his old face glowed. He reached out and touched Xiang Shaolong’s cheek and said

with a smile, "Friend! You don't know how lucky you are, to become the first man in history to go back in time."

Xiang Shaolong did not understand him and said, "You..."

Director Ma was not interested in what he has to say at all and interrupted excitedly, "Did you watch that show 'Time Tunnel' on television. Look! In front of you is the great time tunnel, this is no longer a dream, but a reality. Very soon I will change humankind's perception about time and space..."

Xiang Shaolong was lying in the box so naturally he could not see anything at all. He struggled and said, "Stop joking! Tell me what experiment am I here for?"

Director Ma's excitement was undiminished, and he continued rambling, "Later you will be sent into the time furnace, and once I press one button, the hydrogen reaction furnace fixed at the bottom will gather enough energy within 36 hours to produce enough thermoneuclear in the furnace to make a black hole to go past time and space. By then the magnetic field conveyor will send you back to the world of the past, how marvelous do you think that is."

Cold sweat broke out and Xiang Shaolong looked at this mad scientist who is not much different from a lunatic and said, "Are you joking."

Director Ma said, "Of course I'm not joking. I have successfully sent 20 white mice and two monkeys back and returned them safely. But a pity they could not tell me where exactly they have been, and how they felt. That's why I asked the army to provide us with the fittest warrior to

experiment, and that person is you, Xiang Shaolong.”

Xiang Shaolong was scared out of his wits and he cried out, “I don’t agree! I want to quit the army immediately.”

Director Ma said unhappily, “Don’t be nervous, you’ll be there for less than 10 seconds, just like a short dream. I only want you to remember what happened in the dream. You can give the injection now.”

Xiang Shaolong was still protesting when one of the staff came and gave him an injection. As he gradually lost his senses, the cover was lowered and became a sturdy metal box. It was moved and pushed into the round entrance of the time furnace.

All the equipment in the laboratory immediately started working and numerous indicator lights lighted up. Close to 400 researchers were at work, concentrating on working and observing the equipments.

Time passed on slowly, and a few hours passed.

Director Ma who went to the main control centre became more and more excited, his eyes gleaming.

The final moment will soon arrive; the laboratory began a countdown from 100.

“60, 59, 58...”

The alarm suddenly went off.

The researcher in charge of supervising the energy field inside the furnace cried out in alarm, “The energy level in

the time furnace is rising abnormally fast. Director Ma, please advise if we should switch off the energy source immediately.”

“48, 47...”

All the staff had their eyes fixated on Director Ma.

“39, 38, 37...”

Director Ma looked at the readings on the machine showing the energy level in the furnace, his forehead breaking out in cold sweat. He hesitated for a moment and suddenly waved his hand and ordered, “Implement the fifth emergency procedure now!”

A thunderous sound could be heard from within the furnace, and the whole laboratory started shaking, intense and hot white rays of light shot out of the cracks in the time furnace.

Before anyone had a chance to scream, the whole hidden underground laboratory was shattered into pieces by the strong explosion, and not a single thing remained. Naturally no one was left alive.

CHAPTER 2

Ancient Beauty

[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG woke up suddenly, his whole body in intense pain. He suddenly realized he's now falling from a great height.

"Crash!"

Tiles flew all over and he felt himself crashing through a roof right into a house, and landed on a man. Groans and the sound of bones cracking can be heard.

It was followed by a female's scream. And in his daze he seems to see the back of a naked woman running out, and

then he passed out.

Without knowing how many days have passed, in between bouts of consciousness, he seems to feel a woman taking care of him meticulously. Helping to clean his body and change his clothes, treating his wounds, feeding him goat's milk. Finally on a certain night, he woke up. The scene that appeared before his eyes made him draw in a gasp of cold air.

Heavens! Where is this place?

He was lying on a soft and thick carpet, an oil lamp hanging on the wall. The dim light shone weakly in this crude house about 10 square meters large with mud and hay as walls and tiles as woof. On one side of the wall, rain coats and hats made from straw hung on it, and at the corner of the house there's a fire pit with no fire. At its side there were cauldrons, stove, plates, bowls etc. All primitive cooking equipments that can only be seen in museums. There were a few chests of different sizes on the other end, and there was a copper mirror on one of the chests.

Xiang Shaolong felt a chill in his heart.

That crazy director said he will only be here for 10 seconds, so why is he still in this nightmarish place. Could he really have gone back to Emperor Qin's hometown?

Footsteps were heard.

Xiang Shaolong stared at the wooden door, his heart beating quickly, praying that this is only part of the experiment, a

prank set up by Crazy Ma to trick him into believing that he's really gone back to the past in that accursed furnace.

The wooden door was pushed open.

A beautiful lady wearing ancient hemp garment who could only possibly appear in movies appeared. She has a red scarf on her head, her long hair parted in the center, swept to the sides, tucked behind her ear and plaited into two braids. She carried a bottle, and on her feet she wore straw sandals and walked in.

She looked pretty, her figure nice and slim, and when her lively eyes saw Xiang Shaolong staring at her in shock. She was so startled she almost dropped the bottle. She hurriedly put it down, knelt down in front of him, her slender hands touching his forehead. She said some words very quickly in her melodious voice, her face full of joy.

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, "It's the end." and fainted again.

The sunlight irritated his eyes, waking him up. The house was quiet without anyone else.

He's in a better shape than the last time. Besides he's always been optimistic, so he stopped trying to think and tried to get up. He came out from beneath the blanket and realized he is now dressed in weird looking ancient clothing that is at least two sizes too small. His collar crisscrossed around his front from the back of his neck and dropped straight to the ground. At the bottom he was wearing an apron like leather shorts, and looked absolutely ugly.

Xiang Shaolong suppressed the urge to hide beneath the blankets again and looked ahead. He saw that the roof was recently mended and remembered that when he dropped down from the sky, he landed on a man.

Is that person dead or alive? If he has hurt someone, why is that pretty ancient young woman treating him so nicely!

With all these questions puzzling him, he stood up.

He felt a wave of dizziness, and after a moment he found himself leaning in front of the window, his hands grabbing the sill, supporting his body. The sunlight shone on his face, making him feel a little better.

What really happened? Has something gone wrong with that accursed experiment? Why isn't he back yet? Will he be forever unable to return? Wouldn't his family and friends be really worried? And there's no way he can have his great revenge in bed with Zheng Cuizhi now.

Xiang Shaolong is so miserable that he could cry.

The weather is so hot, if only he can have a can of soft drink.

He looked out and saw the lush green grass, abnormally blue sky and clouds that looked even whiter and cleaner than cotton.

Xiang Shaolong's heart lurched, and knew that he has really gone back to the past. Why else would there be such an unpolluted sky.

The skin on his limbs has scars from the burn and luckily his

is healthy and his skin is now renewing the cells, so it's not too serious.

After wallowing in self-pity for a moment Xiang Shaolong felt his energy rapidly returning and his curiosity is rising.

What is the world like outside? Can he really find the tyrannous Emperor Qin as depicted in the movies?

He pushed the door open and walked out. It turned out he is in a quiet little valley, a stream flowing down the back of the house out of the valley. On the right of the stream he seems to hear a girl's singing. On the left is a mulberry forest, a place to cultivate silkworms.

Once he thought of the ancient beauty, Xiang Shaolong's mood lifted and he walked towards the sound of the singing.

The girl was dressed in white; her skirt pulled up and tucked into the waist, revealing the thin chemise under the skirt and a pair of round and slender legs. She was squatting at the side of the stream washing clothes and cutlery, her expression languid and humming an unknown folksong.

Xiang Shaolong saw her revealing herself, and she's quite pretty as well and desire filled him so he walked over. However he was still unsteady on his feet and stepped on a loose rock. He exclaimed in alarm and fell into the stream.

That beauty was startled and jumped into the water to help him.

Xiang Shaolong stood up in the chest deep stream and the girl happened to reach him and grabbed his hands to place it

on her shoulder.

Xiang Shaolong was roused and took advantage of the situation to lean onto her fragrant body.

The lady spoke to him in shock and concern with a string of words.

This time Xiang Shaolong's brains is more alert and after some concentration he understood most of what she said. It sounded like a difficult dialect used around Hebei or Shanxi region. He vaguely figured out that she was reprimanding him for running around before he has fully recovered, and was so full of gratitude that he blurted out, "Thank you Miss!"

That lady was stunned for a moment. She stared at him and asked, "Where did you come from?"

This sentence may be difficult to understand, but Xiang Shaolong finally guessed the meaning and was immediately dumbfounded. What can he say? Tell her that he came from the 21st century in a time machine?

The two of them were still standing in the water, totally drenched. It doesn't matter to Xiang Shaolong but that beauty's clothes were thin and after being wet it showed off her curves, and she's no different from being naked.

The lady saw Xiang Shaolong's hot eyes staring at her chest. She blushed and immediately forgot her question, and hurriedly helped him to shore.

Xiang Shaolong can't help but take the opportunity to lightly

knock into her breasts and the lady's face blushed even redder, but she did not object or reprimand him.

Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic. It seems that the beauties of this era are even more open than those in the 21st century. All those talk about not taking three steps beyond the house or having to marry the man once he sees her body was all far fetched, or it's those hateful Confusionists lecturing about morals during later years.

So it seems that, even if he does not return to the 21st century for the time being, life would not be too boring.

Xiang Shaolong changed out of his wet clothes and sat opposite to the beauty, eating the rice she cooked, with vegetables, mutton and braised meat marinated with five spices.

Maybe because he's hungry, but Xiang Shaolong enjoyed the meal, all the food tasted especially delicious, even better than Peking duck or hamburgers.

The beauty ate and looked at him with interest at the same time.

Xiang Shaolong was thinking to himself that this is such a secluded place, and not a village or even another house could be seen, and yet she seems to be living a fulfilling life. Could it be that the past is really better than the present?

The beauty said something softly.

Xiang Shaolong asked in surprise, "What?"

The beauty repeated her words and this time he understood. She was saying that he's very tall, and she has never seen someone so tall.

He was secretly laughing that people of this era must all be short, and asked her, "What is your name?"

The beauty shook her head to indicate she could not understand his question and encouraged him to repeat three more times before she replied, "The people of Mulberry Forest Village all call me Mei Canniang (means pretty silkworm lady)."

This time it is Xiang Shaolong's turn to not understand. By the time he clarified it, the two of them were laughing happily. So Xiang Shaolong told her his name as well. The conversation flowed with such tries, failures and continuous work, neither party wanting it to end. When Xiang Shaolong is 80% confident of understanding her dialect, he asked her about what happened the day he fell in through the roof.

Mei Canniang blushed slightly and said, "The man you crushed to death the other day is a bandit from a neighboring village called Jiao Du. He followed me home all the way from the market and was going to rape me. Luckily young master fell down from the sky and crushed him to death. I've buried him in the Mulberry Forest."

She paused for a moment, her face reddened to the ears and she lowered her head and said shyly, "I was married to two brothers, but they were forcefully conscripted into the army by bad people and were killed in Chang Ping."

The battle of Chang Ping, is one of the famed battles between Qin and Zhao, where the army of Qin killed all 400,000 of the Zhao's army. Xiang Shaolong hurriedly asked, "How long ago did this happen?"

Mei Canniang replied, "It happened nine years ago."

The battle of Chang Ping happened in 260BC, then isn't it 251BC now. Crazy Director Ma wanted to send him back to 246BC which is the year Emperor Qin ascended the throne, and although he's off by five years, but considering the facts he's still quite accurate.

He asked, "What is this place?"

Mei Canniang replied, "Didn't I tell you, it's Mulberry Village!"

Xiang Shaolong asked, "Is this part of the Kingdom of Zhao?"

Mei Canniang shook her head, "I don't understand what you're talking about? I only know what happens in Mulberry Village. The news of my husbands' death were told to me by the people in the market."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed in surprise, "You really married two husbands at the same time?"

Mei Canniang replied, "Of course it's true!"

Xiang Shaolong sighed quietly to himself. Although he has read a few books about the Warring States, but he's not familiar with the customs during this period at all, so he put aside this question and continued, "Did you not bear any

children for them?"

Mei Canniang replied quietly, "After the two fathers of the children left, life was extremely difficult and the children all died of sickness. Later I learned to keep silkworms and life finally settled."

Xiang Shaolong felt pity for her, this beauty has suffered much.

Mei Canniang said quietly, "I have been praying to Heaven everyday, praying to her to bestow me a husband. Just when I was at my saddest, Heaven opened her eyes and dropped you for me. I am so ecstatic. From now on you will be Canniang's husband."

Xiang Shaolong was absolutely dumbfounded. But it's not too bad as well. He need not put in so much effort to explain where he came from.

Hai! It seems that he'll have to depend on her to support him. Suddenly he had a flash of inspiration, and thought that in 251BC, Emperor Qin is still destitute in Handan, the capital of Zhao. If he can find and befriend him, when he becomes the emperor in future, then won't his fortunes rise as well, and can have anything he wants, including beauties? Once he thought of this, his heart itched and he asked, "Do you know the way to Handan?"

Mei Canniang shook her head at a loss, then her face turned pale and she chewed her lower lips and stammered, "Are you thinking of leaving this place?"

Xiang Shaolong climbed over, stuck himself to her fragrant back, his hands reaching forward to hold her little tummy and said gently, "Don't be afraid! No matter where I go, I'll bring you with me."

Mei Canniang's body softened at his touch and she exclaimed happily, "Really!"

Xiang Shaolong nibbled her ear lobes and replied, "Of course!"

Mei Canniang's two husbands were all coarse and unrefined men, so she has never encountered such flirtatious teasing, her slender body shook and she said, "I'm going to the market tomorrow, I'll ask someone then! Someone will surely know where Handan is."

Xiang Shaolong put his huge hand into her clothes and kneaded her voluptuous bosom, asking "That bandit Jiao Du, did he... heh... what you?"

Mei Canniang panted, "He just took off my clothes, and had not... Ai!"

Her lips have been locked.

Xiang Shaolong has never seen such a gentle and accommodating beauty, so he hurriedly showed her his best moves. The whole room was heated up and moans and pants joined together to form an orchestra. Mei Canniang, who has been alone for so many years, finally tasted for the first time the joy of being an equal with men in the act of copulation.

Xiang Shaolong felt an itch in his nose and sneezed. He woke up and saw that it was Mei Canniang teasing him with a mulberry leaf.

The sun has not risen.

He hugged Mei Canniang and pressed her down, using his body to put pressure on her sensitive areas, and even pushed her buttocks up with his hand so that she cannot avoid him while he greedily kissed her wet lips. Mei Canniang was totally caught unawares and almost lost her senses from the teasing. She kept crying out, and who knows if she was expressing her joy or objection.

Xiang Shaolong flipped her skirt over, revealing her round yet firm thighs, and was about to proceed when Mei Canniang moaned with a flush, "Shaolong! We have to go to the market immediately!"

Xiang Shaolong came to his senses immediately and stopped his assault. He warned her, "Do you still dare to be mischievous?"

Mei Canniang covered her mouth and laughed, "Yes! But not now, if we don't go to the market now we won't even have food for today."

Xiang Shaolong was aroused by her heated body and hesitated, "It won't take too much time to do it just once, right?"

Mei Canniang suddenly hugged him and said gently, "My good man! Besides eating some food after lunch yesterday,

you have been doing it to me until I fell asleep. You're even more capable than my two husbands added together and now you want to continue. Are you trying to kill me! Get up quickly!"

Xiang Shaolong thought of her hunger and charm last night and felt desire again, but once he thought of looking for Emperor Qin, he can only suppress his lust and climbed out.

Mei Canniang took out a set of clothes and said, "I made this for you when you were unconscious, you'll certainly look very good wearing it."

With her help, Xiang Shaolong wore it and it fitted him perfectly. It may be made of coarse material and hemp but Mei Canniang's eyes shone on seeing it and complimented him, "Mei Canniang has never seen any man as handsome as you in the world." And used a cloth to tie his growing hair before going on their way after washing up.

Xiang Shaolong carried a whole bag of silk, with a hatchet around his waist, straw shoes on his feet and followed Mei Canniang out of the valley, towards the ancient civilization 2000 years ago.

CHAPTER 3
Showing Off For The First Time
[Translated by JEAN]

THE TWO OF THEM walked down the hill in the darkness preceding dawn, towards the marketplace beyond the endless hills.

Xiang Shaolong has never felt so much love and infatuation towards any women before. He carried her and ran down. To a warrior like him who has gone through special training, this is as easy as breathing.

However Mei Canniang was extremely surprised, but once she thought that he is a gift from Heaven, she no longer felt

bewildered.

Xiang Shaolong asked her effortlessly, “How did you end up marrying those two brothers? Where is your own family?”

Mei Canniang screamed in shock just as he jumped. She patted her chest and her pretty face was blushing from the excitement. She replied, “I live in a place that is three day’s journey towards the sun. One day, the two brothers came with 10 tiger skins, 1 bear skin, 50 marten skins, five cows and 100 goats and gave to my father in exchange for me. Our tribe has never seen such extravagant gifts, so I married them.”

Xiang Shaolong carried her up by her waist and waded through a three meter wide river, thinking that if he has the latest AK47, then he can hunt for tiger skins in exchange for women. He asked her, “How old were you then?”

Mei Canniang held on to his neck tightly and whispered in his ear, “14!”

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed in surprise, “What? That’s below the legal age for intercourse!”

When they reached the main road outside the mountainous area, the sun revealed its first ray of light.

This couple who should have been separated by over 2000 years walked closely side by side, chatting happily.

Mei Canniang finally found someone, and after spending the most exciting and romantic night in her life, she was ecstatic. She was pulling Xiang Shaolong like a little girl, kicking her

little straw sandals, walking cheerfully. The painful journey in the past has now become an endless joy, and she said with a laugh, "In the past I had to walk at least 20 hours to the market, but ever since someone built this road for military transport, it takes only eight hours to reach the market. A lot of time has been saved."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, so war can actually promote the development of transportation, and indirectly boost the economy and increase efficiency. So it seems that, in this era, there are advantages to wars.

Hai! A pity he can't bring anything here. If he has a machinegun, or even a gun, he may become the highest paid soldier in this warring states period.

He can't help but laugh once he thought of this.

Then he thought of the queen of bars Zhou Xiangmei and Zhang Cuizhi who caused him to end up in this state. And his parents, they always said that he's unfilial, his two older brothers and three older sisters are all better than him. Now that he's gone, he reckons that they won't be too sad. But he still felt that this is not the case. A pity that he can't give them a call right now to tell them that he's safe.

The sound of wheels grating along the ground sounded behind. It turned out to be a mule cart going towards the market, with a dozen or so white sheep on it. On the cart there were an old and a young man dressed as farmers and when they gave a friendly greeting, they were surprised and scrutinized the tall and well-built Xiang Shaolong. In

contrast, they weren't too surprised about Mei Canniang's beauty.

After the mule cart was far gone, a few horses ran swiftly past and the men riding them were dressed like ancient warriors, on their horses there were bows, swords, axes etc, but they were not from the army.

The two of them avoided them and stood aside.

Mei Canniang spoke in his ear, "These warriors are all for hire. They help merchants transport money, and it's the most profitable business."

Xiang Shaolong laughed, "Ha! Finally there's a job suitable for me!"

Mei Canniang shrieked, "No! I cannot lose a husband like you again."

Xiang Shaolong was startled and after reassuring her, they continued on their way.

The nearer they got to the market, the more crowded the roads became. Most of them were pushing wooden carts with a single wheel, carrying various goods like corn, millet, sorghum, rice, wheat, garlic, cows, goats etc. And all of them were hurrying towards the same destination.

Only now did Xiang Shaolong realize how huge he is. The tallest among the people is still shorter than him by half a head and he looked around complacently, feeling like a crane among chickens.

After another hour, they finally arrived at the market.

40 odd kinds of mud houses, straw houses and stone houses were lined up untidily on two sides, forming a wide street. Various kinds of harvests and animals, buyers and sellers filled the mud road that was about half a mile long, a feeling of festivity filled the air.

They had just stepped into the market when Mei Canniang cried out quietly in fear, "Look! The group of men on the left is the bandit Jiao Du's brothers. They're staring at us, what should we do?"

Xiang Shaolong gathered his wits and walked alertly forward.

A group of 10 odd powerful looking men who are obviously the town bullies were standing or sitting in front of a mud house but their eyes were fixed onto them in astonishment.

Mei Canniang continued, "They surely know about Jiao Du looking for me, and thought that I've become his woman. So when they saw it's you instead, they were astonished. Oh dear, we better leave immediately!"

Xiang Shaolong scrutinized the crude metal swords they carried with his professional judgment and gave them a suave smile. He said to Mei Canniang, "My wife, do not panic. Your husband is here, no one will be able to hurt a single hair of yours."

He realized that the words he used is getting more and more similar to what these ancient people uses that he can't help but laugh out loud.

Mei Canniang was so frightened her face turned pale, and pulled him towards the other end of what you can hardly call a 'street'.

The two of them melted into the crowd. While others were sizing him up, Xiang Shaolong was taking note of his surroundings without any concern.

All these people from the warring states, just from the way they dressed, he can tell that they came from different places. Regardless of men or women, most of them have a flat face, short, rough skin, very few of them has the same alluring body and pretty face like Mei Canniang. But they all looked simple and honorable, giving others a good impression.

The only exception was the men and women wearing unique red headpieces. Their hats were not like the hat that he's used to, which covers the top of a person's head. Instead it covers only the hair, which was tied into a bun, two red ropes hanging down from the side and tied into a knot under the chin.

The men and women of this tribe were not only tall and good looking. The women were fair and wore extremely sexy short tops and skirts which bared the chest and arms. It really was an eye-opener for him and quite unbelievable as well, changing his perception that all ancient people must be conservative.

A few of those young women were exceptionally outstanding, almost as pretty as Mei Canniang, and almost

all of them trade in horses.

When Xiang Shaolong made eye contact with the prettiest girl among them, those beauties all made eyes at this fine specimen of a man from another dimension, not at all bothered that his eyes was fixated on their half naked chest and slender legs.

Mei Canniang felt much safer once they're among the crowd and when she saw his lecherous look, she's not offended at all. She said quietly, "They're all from the Baiyi tribe, expert in rearing horses. All the men and women are very good hunters, no one dares to bully them."

Xiang Shaolong felt his heart itching, but he was pulled into a mud house by Mei Canniang who took over the silk he was carrying and proceeded to do business with the man inside.

Xiang Shaolong took the opportunity to slip out of the house.

"Dang! Dang! Dang!"

Copper bells sounded in the biggest stone house opposite, and someone shouted, "Quality horse for 30 coppers! Quality horse for 30 coppers!"

Xiang Shaolong was curious and walked forward. On the stairs of the large house stood ten over huge men wearing similar clothes as those riders they met on the way here. One of them wore a tall headpiece, his clothes were comparatively more splendid, a difference of heaven and earth with the coarse clothes worn by the farmers.

He may have good eyesight, but from a distance of over ten

meters, he can only see that person has a square face and large ears, with a solemn look, and carried with him an air of affluence.

There was an immediate commotion in the market as the horse traders all squeezed forward with their horses and the situation was chaotic.

Right at this time, he heard a cold snort next to him.

By the time Xiang Shaolong was aware, those brothers of Jiao Du have already surrounded him heavily.

He unhurriedly took two steps back, and pushed Mei Canniang back into the house just as she was walking out. He asked quietly, "Does one have to go to jail for murder here?"

Mei Canniang asked in surprise, "What is jail?"

Xiang Shaolong rephrased his question, "Does anyone care if someone gets killed?"

Mei Canniang understood a little and replied, "Besides their tribesmen, no one else will bother."

She then added, "You're not going to fight with so many of them right? They have swords! I can give them the money I've just bartered for."

Xiang Shaolong was assured and thought, in this time period, nothing is more useful than strength and martial arts. All the tough training he had in the past will not go to waste at all.

One of Jiao Du's brother shouted, "Mei Canniang! Where is Big Brother Jiao? And who is this stinking man?"

By now those people on the street are starting to realize that something is happening here and all came forward to watch the show. Even that well dressed man who is here to buy horses and his men all stopped their trade and walked towards them.

Xiang Shaolong, who is used to creating trouble and fighting was assured and he laughed loudly, "Your Big Brother Jiao has been killed, come over if you want revenge."

Mei Canniang was so frightened that she shivered and hugged him tightly from behind.

The expression on their faces changed at the same time and with a 'swish' they all pulled out their swords.

Xiang Shaolong slowly pushed Mei Canniang away and pulled out the hatchet from his waist. Immediately there were sighs and pitying noises coming from the crowd, saying that he does not know his own capability, actually using a hatchet to block swords.

2 burly men rushed towards him with their swords raised, slashing towards him from the left and right.

The crowd screamed, and one of the Baiyi beauties who were making eyes with Xiang Shaolong covered her eyes, not daring to look further.

Xiang Shaolong roared and his hatchet swung forward fast as lightning.

In his nearly 10 years of strict training, there is a saying that anything can be used as a weapon. These two men in front

may be brave and ruthless, but he does not take them into account at all. He can even easily defeat them empty handed, much less with a hatchet in his hands now.

“Clang! Clang!”

The long swords were swept away. Xiang Shaolong ran forward like an arrow, his left fist punching a man's face, his leg giving a flying kick towards the other man's groin.

The two of them immediately cried and fell down, their long swords dropping from their hands.

Xiang Shaolong then retreated to where Mei Canniang was, his hatchet held in front of him, with a combat ready pose, shouting at the shocked crowd, “Come!”

The rest hesitated, not one of them dared to lead the fight. They have never imagined that there are such swift and vicious attacks.

Xiang Shaolong gave a long laugh and leapt out like a ferocious tiger, his hatchet slashing down and was embroiled in a battle with those 20 odd people.

He moved swiftly so that the enemy has no chance to group together and in no time they all fell to the ground, either felled by his punches or his kicks.

The crowd kept cheering for him. Obviously they've had enough of those bullies.

When Xiang Shaolong became the ultimate winner, he picked up the best sword among the pile and tied it to his

waist.

The crowd cried out, and a few people rushed forward followed by the rest of the crowd. They picked up sticks or hoes or similar weapons and starting hitting those bullies on the ground. It seems that in the face of public fury, none of them will be able to survive.

Mei Canniang ran over and hugged him tightly, exclaiming, "Heavens! You're really brave! I will never have to fear bullies again."

Xiang Shaolong hugged her and walked towards the other end of the street and asked nonchalantly, "Have you found out how to get to Handan?"

Mei Canniang replied, "There's some who have heard of this place, but do not know how to get there."

Footsteps can be heard behind them and someone called out, "Brave man, please hold your steps!"

Xiang Shaolong turned around while still hugging Mei Canniang and saw that man dressed in fine robes who was buying horses walking towards them.

Xiang Shaolong, Mei Canniang, and that well dressed man sat down on the floor in a big room.

Xiang Shaolong studied the man, and guessed that he's about 40 years old, his features gives an impression of intelligence and his skin smooth. Obviously he has never done any manual labor in his life and compared to the farmers at the market, it's like the difference between a city

man and a poor country man.

That man introduced himself, "I am Tao Fang, one of the 12 servants of Master Wu. Brave hero, your accent sounds strange. I wonder where you're come from?"

Xiang Shaolong said, "My wife and I are both from Mulberry Village. I wonder if Master Tao has invited me here for some deals?"

Tao Fang looked perplexed, obviously not understanding his choice of words, so he could only guess part of the meaning. Luckily he's used to trading with various tribes, so he nodded and said, "Is brave hero interested in earning a large sum of money?"

Xiang Shaolong looked at Mei Canniang.

She gave a sweet smile and nodded, indicating that she has no objections to any decisions he makes. To her, a man's words are orders.

Xiang Shaolong felt released from the binds of military rules, and feeling carefree, nodded, "Would Master Tao please enlightens me!"

Tao Fang leaned forward and said excitedly, "With brave hero's marvelous skills, you can block 100 men with ease. If you agree to become my bodyguard, I can pay you 50 coppers every month, what do you think?"

Mei Canniang exclaimed "Ah!"

Grabbed his arm and uttered, "That's enough to sustain us

for one year.”

Xiang Shaolong took a whiff at her face and replied, “The offer is very attractive, but we’re planning to go to Handan!”

A hint of a smile appeared at the corner of Tao Fang’s lips and he said calmly, “Hero must not have heard of the great name of our Master Wu. He is the finest ‘King of Livestock’ in Handan. After collecting enough horses all over the place, we will send them to Handan. If hero will become my bodyguard, won’t it be killing two birds with one stone?”

Xiang Shaolong replied joyously, “But I’m going to bring her along!”

Tao Fang looked at Mei Canniang and laughed, “Don’t worry! Besides buying fine horses, we also purchase beauties from various places, so there’s no problem at all if hero wants to bring your beauty along.”

He furrowed his brows as he looked at his clothes and continued, “I’ll order someone to clean up a place for you and your wife to rest as well as get you some new clothes. We’ll return to Handan at the break of dawn tomorrow. What weapons do you use, if it’s sword, I’ll immediately give you a good sword made by an old blacksmith in Handan. You can throw away the one you picked up earlier.”

Xiang Shaolong burst out laughing, and asked, “How long will it take to get to Handan?”

Tao Fang has obviously taken a liking to him and replied without irritation, “On a fast horse, about 10 days. But the

way we are going to travel, and having to purchase horses and beauties on the way, we'll take at least a month."

Xiang Shaolong was in a good mood, and once he thought that he'll be able to find Emperor Qin in Handan, he immediately said there's no problem.

So this matter was thus settled.

Tao Fang ordered someone to bring him to a camp near the market. The person who led the way is Li Shan, also a bodyguard. He was very impressed with his skills, so naturally he was extremely respectful.

The camp was heavily guarded, with a guard in front of the 30 odd tents, either to prevent the beauties from escaping, or to prevent thieves.

Next to the camp there was a temporary erected horse enclosure, with more than a hundred horses kept in there.

Li Shan introduced Xiang Shaolong to the head of the bodyguards Dou Liang. The fierce looking warrior sized him up coldly and said disdainfully, "Since Brother Xiang is so capable, I must exchange pointers with you when I have the chance."

After he spoke, he eyed Mei Canniang lecherously, obviously disregarding Xiang Shaolong's presence.

Li Shan was a little embarrassed and led the two of them to a tent at the edge of the camp and left after a few words.

The two went into the tent.

Mei Canniang lowered her head and did not speak, but it was obvious she was troubled.

Xiang Shaolong hugged her and said gently, "There's no need to be afraid of that Dou Liang. Sooner or later I'll find a chance to teach him a lesson. I, Xiang Shaolong is not afraid of any bullies at all."

And he can't help but think of Black Faced Deity. Mei Canniang said quietly, "City folks are all deceitful, I'm afraid I won't be used to that kind of life."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that modern folks are a hundred times worse than you ancient people, but he assured her, "With me to protect you, what is there to fear?"

Mei Canniang's eyes reddened, collapsed into his arms and cried piteously, "Everyone who lives in Mulberry Forest Village are good people, our lives fulfilling, getting better year by year. And now that the bullies Jiao Du and his men are dead, it'll be even more peaceful. Husband! Why don't we return there to stay, happily until we grow old and die, and I'll have children with you, isn't that better?"

Xiang Shaolong sighed secretly, he's so used to indulgences in life, how will he ever get used to such a life. He said gently, "Why don't we do this! I'll borrow 100 coppers from Tao Fang, that'll be enough for your living expenses for two years, and I'll forge a path in Handan. Once I am successful, I'll come back for you, won't that benefit both of us?"

Mei Canniang stammered, "Won't it mean that I'll have to part from you?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "At the earliest it'll take a few months, the latest one to two years, I will definitely return. Don't forget that I am sent by Heaven, so I'll definitely not die."

Mei Canniang wailed, and just when Xiang Shaolong was at a loss, she came to a decision and tearfully agreed to Xiang Shaolong's suggestion.

Once they thought of the impending parting, the two of them engaged in joyous acts in the tent until dinnertime, when they left the tent to join Tao Fang for dinner. He brought up the topic of paying his salary in advance and without a second word, Tao Fang gave him 200 coppers straightaway. Xiang Shaolong can't help but feel impressed.

But that head of bodyguards Dou Liang was extremely jealous.

Tao Fang asked in passing again Xiang Shaolong's origins, but Xiang Shaolong still insisted that he's from Mulberry Forest Village, so Tao Fang did not press the issue.

Early that night they returned to the tent and continued in their engagements until the next morning. After an unwilling parting, Mai Canniang returned to Mulberry Forest Village alone while Xiang Shaolong followed Tao Fang towards the unknown Capital of Zhao, starting on his journey to look got Emperor Qin.

CHAPTER 4
Surrounded By Danger
[Translated by JEAN]

THEY walked for less than two hours when it started raining heavily.

The 100 odd warriors wore their straw raincoats, escorting 12 horse carriages and almost 200 fine horses and moved forward with much aplomb.

Xiang Shaolong thought about Mei Canniang, thought about her tears as she parted, and felt an indescribable sadness. He almost had the urge to turn back and look for her but he remembered he had taken 200 coppers from Tao Fang and

stopped himself. He is not someone who will go back on his words. He must at least work for a few months as a bodyguard.

The rain only stopped at dusk and the entourage stopped and pitched tents. 60 odd young girls came out of the horse carriages, all of them young and beautiful. A few among them were exceptionally pretty, comparable to Mei Canniang.

Although they all looked tired, but they were all in high spirits, not like slaves who have just been bought at all. They even helped to cook and talk and laugh with the warriors, which baffled Xiang Shaolong.

The girls realized that now there's another handsome man, Xiang Shaolong, so they all made eyes at him. A pity that he has lost the mood to flirt because he missed Mei Canniang. And instead he went for a walk outside the camp.

The wilderness after the rain was crisply green. The air is refreshing.

Xiang Shaolong can't help but feel sentimental.

No matter how pretty nature is, how alluring the world in front of him is, but surrounding him was undeveloped land, endless forests. It's only the beginning of man's destruction towards nature. But by the 21st century, they have reached the end of this path of no return, and humankind had to suffer the consequences.

If he has the power to change all these, would history be re-

written?

“Shh!”

Xiang Shaolong was startled.

Amidst the rustling leaves, a Baiyi girl wearing a sleeveless top and short skirt, which revealed her rounded thighs, jumped out. It turned out to be the prettiest Baiyi girl he met the other day at the market.

She went to him excitedly and looked up to him, saying, “I’ve been following you for two days and nights.”

She pulled him and said nervously, “Escape quickly!”

Xiang Shaolong pulled her into his arms instead and holding her tightly by her waist, kissed her lips.

The Baiyi lady reacted fierily, even hugging his strong neck, not at all shy.

Xiang Shaolong believes more and more that women of this era, once they meet a man they like, are more direct than women from the 21st century, and felt his spirits lifting.

The Baiyi girl left his mouth, her pretty face blushed an endearing red and said hurriedly, “My name is Xiu Yi, come back with me to Mount Baiyi! If you follow those Zhao people to Handan, you’ll certainly be killed by Hui Hu and his group of horse thieves.”

Xiang Shaolong listened to her melodious voice, enjoying her voluptuous body, and his desire was just rising when he was suddenly shocked and asked, “What did you say?”

In reality he only understood about 30 to 40 percent of her words.

The Baiyi girl Xiu Yi slowed down and said each word clearly, "A few days ago, our tribesmen received news, Hui Hu and his 800 horse thieves were preparing to lay an ambush for the Zhao people at Dashi Valley to steal their women and horses. If you go with them, you'll surely be killed. They're a lot more formidable than Jiao Du and his men."

Xiang Shaolong finally understood, his two ill-mannered hands continuously caressing her chest and buttocks; and laughed, "Don't worry! I have a way to deal with them."

Xiu Yi smiled coquettishly, using her chest to press against him and her arms to rub against him, asked with a smile, "I know you will not abandon your friends to save your own life. I shall not force you. But I've given you such useful information, how are you going to thank me?"

Xiang Shaolong smiled bitterly, "Besides copper coins, you can have anything else."

Xiu Yi disentangled herself from his arms and turned a circle in front of him, saying with a flirtatious smile, "Everyone says that I'm pretty, do you agree? I still do not know your name!"

Xiang Shaolong stared at her, all his worries gone and replied, "I'm Xiang Shaolong!"

Xiu Yi repeated it a few times, and suddenly loosened her clothes, revealing a fair body that can make any man dizzy.

She said with a smile, "Would this be prettier? The men in the tribe all love to look at my body."

This is the first time Xiang Shaolong has seen a girl like that, he breathed in deeply and ordered, "Come here!"

Xiu Yi threw herself into his arms, and as she took off his clothes, she moaned, "It's always men who have begged me, but this time I'm begging you. Come! Lover! I have not gone home for two days. If you did not come out I'd have gone into the camp to look for you."

Xiang Shaolong returned to camp all relaxed and looked for Tao Fang. He pulled him to a corner and told him everything that just happened.

Tao Fang's expression became very somber and after a while, reached out and placed his hand on his shoulder and said, "You have saved my life this time. The problem now is not those horse thieves, but there's a spy among my people."

Xiang Shaolong nodded, "Master Tao must have kept the route you're taking to Handan very secret, not many will know about it. So if Hui Hu knows that you will be passing by Dashi Valley, there must be a spy who supplied him with this news."

Tao Fang was extremely surprised at his quick wit and complimented him, "I was right about you. Not only are you good looking, but intelligent and brave as well. Good! As long as I am still in power, I will not treat you badly."

Xiang Shaolong laughed to himself; it'll be more like it if Emperor Qin said these words to him.

Tao Fang hesitated for a moment before saying, "The spy must be Dou Liang. There are two reasons why I'm so sure it's him. Firstly he excused himself from the group for two days, so he must have met up with Hui Hu. Secondly, out of the few who knows our route, he's the only one from Wei, and people from Wei cannot be trusted."

Xiang Shaolong was perplexed, "Since the Weis cannot be trusted; why did you employ him?"

Tao Fang replied, "Shaolong, you have been living in the mountains, naturally you're not familiar with the situation in central plains."

Xiang Shaolong replied earnestly, "I really want to know!"

Tao Fang explained, "We have to start the story from the partitioning of Jin into three states. That was the beginning of the division of the whole era. It was said that the powerless King of Zhou isolated the states and after the split, Wei, Han and our Zhao kingdoms were forged and no one paid any heed to Zhou. If the past can be described as a peaceful stream, now it's a torrential river. The change within the last ten years almost equals the change that has happened over the last 100 years. Those who are incapable will be ousted."

And he can't help but sigh as he spoke.

Xiang Shaolong cannot imagine that a horse trader like him

would be so knowledgeable, and felt the urge to tell him that no matter how they struggle or fight, Emperor Qin would be the one who unite the world in future. But of course he can't say it out loud, and even if he did, no one would believe him. So he tried to get some information, "Is Qin the strongest and biggest state now?"

Tao Fang looked at him in surprise and said slowly, "Ever since Qin used the reformative policies suggested by they've indeed become stronger and wealthier. They even Gongsun Yang, from the Wei ruling family, destroyed Zhou five years ago but also incurred the wrath of everyone else. Therefore after our state's Great General Le Cheng, Yan She defeated Qin's army badly and three years ago Wei invaded and captured Tao Ju, Qin's most important city in the east. Their strength was greatly diminished."

He was obviously still concerned about the matter of the spy and was not in the mood for further discussion so he said, "Shaolong! I want you to kill that spy Dou Liang for me."

Xiang Shaolong patted his chest and said, "Leave this to me, but if the wrong person was killed, won't the enemy be even happier."

Tao Fang smiled coldly, "You're new here, Dou Liang has not figured out your background. You could test him with words, I'm sure he'll fall into the trap."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that he's smart, and nodded his head in agreement.

Tao Fang's attitude to him changed totally and said, "Anyone

from Wei can be killed. It's only recently that I found out that he's from Wei, and have decided to stop using him after the completion of this task, but I did not expect him to strike first."

He took out an exquisite sheathed dagger and handed it to Xiang Shaolong, saying, "Make it a clean job, after this I'll tell others that I sent him somewhere else on a mission. This dagger is made by a famed blacksmith specializing in making swords in Yue, and can easily cut a strand of flying hair. I'll give this to you, let it drink it's fill of that Wei thief's blood."

Xiang Shaolong saw that he spoke of murder like an everyday affair and was secretly startled. However, all the training he received taught him how to kill, so as long as it's the bad guys he's killing, he won't feel too sad about it.

Tao Fang was suddenly in the mood to chat again and said, "The Weis occupied our capital Handan for two years, and thankfully the State of Qi helped us force the Weis to retreat. But a lot of Weis were still left in Handan, and they became traitors and spies. That is what Dou Liang is, so you must not have any sympathy when you strike."

Xiang Shaolong went back to camp. All the other warriors were respectful towards him and now that the sun is setting, the land started getting darker.

From a corner of the camp sounds of girls laughing could be heard. In any case, Xiang Shaolong had to find Dou Liang, so he might as well walk over and take a look, and was immediately stunned. It turns out that the small river was

filled with naked girls, all bathing and having fun in the water.

My god! Why are ancient women even bolder than the western ladies in Caen or Miami Beach?

A few warriors were at the side of the river enjoying this marvelous scenery, and one of them was Li Shan. He walked forward with a smile and said, "The quality of this batch of girls is very good, does Brother Xiang want to ask Master Tao for two to have some fun? He seems very impressed with you?"

Xiang Shaolong asked in bewilderment, "Where did you find so many pretty women? Don't they feel that it's very sad to be traded like goods?"

Li Shan asked curiously, "Isn't Brother Xiang from the mountains? If women aren't goods then what are they? If they were sold to some poor village or isolated place, they would have to serve the whole family of 10 odd men alone, isn't that worse? Now they can go to the city, and if they're lucky, they may capture the eyes of someone from a wealthy family. They'll be able to wear jewelry, how much more proud can they be!"

Xiang Shaolong may be lecherous, but he's always respected women so he finds it difficult to accept such an attitude. Therefore he can only stop talking about this subject and instead asked, "Where is Dou Liang?"

Li Shan smiled evilly, "Just because he's the head here, he chose the prettiest girl and went into the tent, what do you

think he's going to do?"

Xiang Shaolong was secretly furious and after finding out where his tent is, walked towards it.

Before he reached the tent, he could hear a man panting and a woman moaning.

Xiang Shaolong guessed that he will certainly emerge for dinner so he waited at the side. Indeed, after a while, the girl came out first with her clothes in disarray, followed by Dou Liang.

Xiang Shaolong walked towards him and as he walked past, said quietly, "Come alone with me if you have the guts."

Dou Liang laughed sinisterly and followed him out of the camp.

They came to a dense forest and Xiang Shaolong turned around, taking the opportunity to hide the dagger behind his back and said respectfully, "Brother Dou, I am sent here by Hui Hu to help you."

Dou Liang's hand was already on his sword but once he heard that, he looked at him in extreme shock.

Xiang Shaolong was laughing secretly to himself and said, "There's been a change in plans, Hui Hu has decided not to strike at Dashi Valley, and told me to inform Brother Dou."

Once Dou Liang heard him mention the name Dashi Valley, he was finally hooked and said furiously, "What the heck is Hui Hu trying to do. What other better locations can there

be other than Dashi Valley?”

Xiang Shaolong took the opportunity to step forward and said, “It’s at...”

Dou Liang shouted, “Stand there and talk!”

Xiang Shaolong drew out his long sword and threw it aside, saying with a bitter smile, “Brother Dou is too overly suspicious.”

When Dou Liang saw him drawing his sword, he drew his in retaliation as well but when he saw him throwing it aside, he was relieved and replaced his sword back into the sheath. His expression calmed a little and he said, “That old fox Tao Fang is quite formidable, how can I not be careful.”

Xiang Shaolong suddenly stared at a spot behind him, his expression full of fear.

Naturally Dou Liang would turn his head back for a look and when he saw no one; he knows he has fallen for the trap. He felt coldness on the side of his neck, stabbed by Xiang Shaolong’s dagger, fresh blood flowing out from the vein and he died on the spot.

Xiang Shaolong walked over to his body and sighed, “When it comes to killing who can be better than me, who is from the Special Task Force and well versed in anatomy?”

Xiang Shaolong returned to camp and other than the warriors on patrol, everyone else were gathered at the open area in the middle of the camp. There were 20 over tables, the girls taking 10 tables, and there was a campfire banquet.

There was a wide array of food, and maybe because of this, the women were willing to become goods.

He walked towards Tao Fang, sat next to him and lifted two fingers in a sign of victory, to indicate he has taken care of Dou Liang.

Naturally Tao Fang did not understand his signal, but looking at his spirited expression, he knows that he has succeeded. He was secretly complimenting him, thinking that this lad has killed a man and yet there's no change in his expression, he's indeed a first rate assassin and killer. He said, "Shaolong, go and take a look at the ladies' table, if there's anyone to your liking, just take a few into the tent for fun, no need to be shy."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought to himself, now why would he be shy. It's just that my body is not made of iron after all, after dealing with that insatiable Baiyi wanton, he has no more energy to enjoy another woman, much less a few. He spoke into Tao Fang's ear, "Is Master Tao interested in making a night journey, so that the enemy's spy will suddenly realize tomorrow morning that he's lost our whole camp?"

That night Tao Fang ordered his men to cover the horses' hooves and the wheels of the carriages with soft cloth. Leaving behind a few empty tents and some straw men, they journeyed in the dark of the night until dawn before they pitched camp and rested hidden away in a small valley.

Xiang Shaolong slept soundly in his private tent, now he has

become the head of the bodyguards.

When he woke up he realized that there's a pretty lady in his tent.

The beauty knelt on the floor, her forehead touching the ground and said respectfully, "I am Ting Fangshi, and have been ordered by Master Tao to serve Master Xiang on this journey."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly commending Tao Fang for his kind thoughts. He might as well enjoy the feeling of being a master, so he said, "Sit up!"

Ting Fangshi sat up straight, her voluptuous bosom straining to escape from her clothes.

Xiang Shaolong took a while to shift his gaze back upwards, and immediately recognized her as the beauty Dou Liang took into his tent yesterday. He remembered her tender moans and immediately felt desire, secretly hating Dou Liang for being able to pick a fine specimen. He sat up with a smile, reached out and pinched her face and said gently, "Who can bear to sell you?"

Ting Fangshi lowered her head and said quietly, "It's my husband!"

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed hoarsely, "What? How can there be such a man who does not know how to treasure a woman?"

Ting Fangshi guffawed, covered her little mouth and said, "Master Xiang talks so funnily, you're different from the

others.”

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, of course it's different, we're from a different time period! However he asked, “Is he inept?”

Ting Fangshi asked in alarm, “What is ‘inept’?”

Xiang Shaolong explained patiently, “It means a man who is incapable of copulating with a woman.”

Ting Fangshi finally understood and she shook her head, “That's not the problem, but because he already had over 10 wives; and all of them snubbed me and backstabbed me, saying that I was flirting with other men with my eyes. So he sold me.”

Xiang Shaolong was suddenly enlightened, and felt that beauties truly have a hard life. Because of her beauty has incurred the jealousy of the other evil wives. So he asked nonchalantly, “So did you flirt with other men?”

Ting Fangshi gritted her teeth and said, “Not initially, but I did later. Because I had hoped that a stronger man than him will come and save me. As long as I can get him and his wives out of my sight, I am willing to make any sacrifice.”

She then chuckled and said, “Master Xiang is different from other men. They can't wait to take off their clothes and jump onto me once they see me, only Master Xiang will talk to me like this. I am very grateful.”

Xiang Shaolong felt a sense of pity; the women of this era really have hard lives, like rootless duckweed, their fate

totally controlled by men. His enthusiasm was dampened, the fire of desire he felt early disappeared totally. He stood up and said, "I think there's a clear stream towards the east, I'd like to go there for a cold bath."

Ting Fangshi did not really understand what he said, so after he explained again, she hurriedly stood up and said, "Let me serve Master Xiang with your bath."

She then added quietly, "That would be my greatest honor."

The two of them stood naked in the waist high stream, with Fang Tingshi helping to scrub him. Xiang Shaolong was so comfortable he almost wanted to sigh.

Her pretty face blushed and her eyes shone, appreciating his strong muscles, and she can't help but move her slender hands from the back to the front, gently caressing his chest which is wider than an average man.

This is the first time she has seen such an endearing handsome man, and can't help but feel desire.

Xiang Shaolong was totally drunk on the feeling of unhindered contact with this beauty, feeling her generous bosom rubbing against his back and remembered how her chest looked like as it was straining tightly in her clothes and felt his desire rising again.

Suddenly he heard Tao Fang's voice on the shore, "If Shaolong is satisfied with this woman then let her follow you in future."

Ting Fangshi exclaimed, "Ah!"

Her expression overjoyed. If she can become this man's mistress or maid, she'd be willing even if it means death.

Xiang Shaolong obviously knows that this is Tao Fang's way of bribing him, so after thanking him, asked, "Have the scout returned with any news?"

Tao Fang's eyes settled on Ting Fangshi's peaks, which were trembling slightly. When he bought this woman, he inspected her body personally so he knows how smooth and supple her skin is, so now he felt something. He swallowed his saliva and said, "Shaolong has guessed correctly, there's three thieves running after us but they've been killed. We have lost Hui Hu for the time being but we must not let our guard down. The horse thieves are good at tracking, and added with our slow speed, they will catch up sooner or later."

During his life in the army, Xiang Shaolong has long become accustomed to bathing together with his teammates, so he's not uncomfortable at all that Tao Fang is seeing him.

However, for Ting Fangshi to be admired by him thus, he felt a little taken advantaged of, so he said "We'll leave immediately after the meal and see how far we can travel. Give me 10 odd men; I will hide the tracks of the horses and carriages."

Tao Fang is getting more and more confident of him, so he nodded and said, "We'll depend on you, enjoy yourself!" and left.

Ting Fangshi turned towards him and said while hugging

him, "Master Xiang! I will be yours in future."

How can Xiang Shaolong withstand the sight of her alluring body? So he carried her up and kissed her lips hardly and invaded her body.

It's the first time Ting Fangshi enjoyed such tenderness from a man, so she used all her might to express her willingness and joy.

Familiar moans and groans sounded in Xiang Shaolong's ears again like music from the heavens.

Xiang Shaolong showed all his moves gently, and let this beauty who has suffered in the hands of men enjoy a sweetness that she can never imagine.

CHAPTER 5
Display Of Invincibility
[Translated by JEAN]

AS FAR AS they can see all around them, the land was a large lush plain of green, peppered with wild forests and winding rivers and streams. Nature is so breathtakingly beautiful.

Tao Fang suddenly sighed and said, "I'm in conflict when it comes to the Weis as well. The southwest of Great Jin has a corner separated by the Yellow River, followed by treacherous mountains. It effectively sandwiched the Qin's only entrance in the east. After the separation of the three states, this section was taken by the Weis, and as long as

they remain strong, the Qins will be trapped in the west and cannot conquer towards the east. Hai! So do we wish for the state of Wei to be strong or weak?"

Xiang Shaolong asked, "Why does Master Tai hate the Weis so much?"

Tao Fang's expression turned somber and he said, "Ever since Marquis Wen of Wei reformed Wei, he kept invading others, not only weakening us, but made the Qins stronger and become a danger to us. The chaotic situation now is all the result of the Wei's actions. Secondary are the aberrant Qis who goes back on their words. When we joined forces with Chu and Han to attack Qin, they came to attack us and gave Qin the opportunity to eliminate the two states of Ba and Shu, thus expanding their land. All of them are short sighted people."

Another warrior interrupted, "But the most idiotic would be King Chu. The Qins used only 600 miles of land to entice him to break off friendly ties with Qi. In the end they were left isolated and without reinforcements. The Qins defeated them badly at Danyang and they lost 80,000 men, Hanzhong, northwest of Chengdu and Pingxiao which resulted in a huge setback for their state. Later he was lured by the Qins to go to Wu Pass and was captured by them. In the end he died of an illness in a foreign land. One does not know whether to pity him or laugh at him."

Xiang Shaolong got excited upon hearing all these. In the 21st century there's no turmoil like this where the outcome

can be determined by war. Only here can he show off his capabilities like a fish to water. By now he is thinking less and less about returning.

After the few of them discussed about their strategies at Shantou, they split up to follow up on their respective tasks.

Xiang Shaolong led 30 odd men and set traps and dug holes on the surrounding slopes to prevent the enemy from attacking them in the cover of the night. He also confirmed the emergency back up plans with Tao Fang, who nodded with consent as he listened.

During these few days, Xiang Shaolong would practice on his swordplay and archery whenever he is free. He had learnt all these in the past, but of course such skills were not as important as practicing their marksmanship at that time, so now he has to work harder in these areas.

To a full time army personnel like him, he is more adept at using weapons than anyone else. However he humbly sought advice from other warriors and improved on their swordplay, creating for himself a powerful yet unconstrained style of swordplay that is most lethal. Although he felt that it's still not good enough, but he can't find a good teacher in such a short time, so he'll have to make do with it.

He only returned to the camp to rest late at night.

The beautiful and coquettish Ting Fangshi, who has been nourished by love, had just woken up and was about to change his attire for him when Xiang Shaolong stopped her and said, "I'll sleep in this tonight! I have a feeling the

thieves will come tonight.”

Ting Fangshi was so startled her face turned pale and she stammered, “What should we do then. If I end up in the hands of those horse thieves, I will surely be defiled, and face a fate worse than death.”

Xiang Shaolong hugged and assured her, “Don’t be afraid, with Xiang Shaolong around, I will guarantee your safety, I may stay behind to fight off the enemy, you’ll go with Master Tao to Handan first and I’ll meet up with you later.”

Ting Fangshi’s expression turned stricken and she sobbed, “I ask that Heaven have pity on me and protect Master Xiang. In the past I felt that it doesn’t matter which man I follow. But now I know that if I don’t have Master Xiang, I would not want to live a single day longer.

Xiang Shaolong knows that this enticing beauty has developed feelings for him and suddenly felt desire again. He licked the tears off her face, his other hand reaching into her top and working its way around her bosom. For a moment he remembered Mei Canniang, and secretly thought that it was a good idea not to let her come along, or else she might have been frightened to death now.

Ting Fangshi’s petite body shivered. Her face red and burning, fire coming out of her eyes. Her little mouth gaped open, sighing and moaning, the expression of desire on her face thoroughly enticing.

Xiang Shaolong suddenly stopped; and said “I have to conserve my energy tonight to deal with any situation that

might arise. Can you wait for a night?”

Ting Fangshi gasped and moaned, she has no choice but to nod her head in agreement. But once he saw her rapidly heaving bosom, he knows that she is now in a heat of desire that cannot be extinguished.

For the first time, Xiang Shaolong thought that how idyllic life will be if there's no war.

Ting Fangshi blew out the oil lamp and fell into this man's arms, making him out of control.

Xiang Shaolong hugged a ball of fire and snuggled into the blankets. He asked gently, “I forgot to ask you, have you ever had an affair with another man behind your husband's back?”

Ting Fangshi curled up and nibbling his ear; said softly, “He was very strict with me, but I frequently have to accompany the men he singled out. When he's happy, he'll let his relatives and friends have fun with me. Luckily it's a lot better serving other men than serving him.”

Xiang Shaolong secretly sighed to himself, women in this era has no standing at all, but just the slaves of men. From what she said, a married woman is not that much different from a prostitute. When he thought of the Emperor Qin in the movie, his mother was the favorite concubine of Lu Buwei, who offered her to his father, and no longer felt that such a situation is strange.

Under extreme exhaustion, he slept.

He suddenly woke up, and heard urgent footsteps coming nearer and nearer. Ting Fangshi was frightened awake.

Xiang Shaolong ordered her to stay in the tent and quietly took his sword and left the tent. He met a nervous looking Li Shan and knew that something's wrong so he hurriedly followed him to the top of the eastern hill.

Tao Fang and all his warriors are all awake, crouching at the top of the hill looking at their surroundings.

Under the majestic stars, in the seemingly quiet plains, birds were startled into flight, and there were roars from ferocious tigers.

Tao Fang turned pale and exclaimed, "They're coming!"

Xiang Shaolong is adept at observing his enemy's movements, and guessed that their enemy is still far away and has not grouped up in force. He suggested, "Why don't Master Tao escape with the women first, but leave the horses here. I will lead 50 men to engage the enemy and we will meet in Handan at a later date."

Tao Fang knows that the horse thieves outnumber them and they're all vicious and fearless, and felt a chill in his heart. He reached out and grabbing his shoulders, said with gratitude, "I'll leave everything to you. You must keep your life and come to Handan to look for me. I will take good care of Ting Fangshi for you."

And he left in a hurry after speaking these words.

After a moment, Tao Fang and the women went up the

horse carriage and under the protection of the other 60 odd warriors, left by the other passage that has not been laid with traps.

Xiang Shaolong and the rest immediately busied themselves, improving their defenses, increasing the depth of the trap holes, putting more ropes to trip the horses and such.

3 hours later, the horse thieves finally came. The horses on the hills neighed as the thieves surrounded the small hill. Murderous horse thieves were all around them, causing a chill down the various warriors' heart, because they are really greatly outnumbered.

Xiang Shaolong felt he was getting numb and kept reminding himself to calm down.

Suddenly footsteps were heard, two teams of 100 odd horse thieves ran up the hill from the east and west.

Xiang Shaolong knew that the other party was just testing them, so he instructed everyone to stand by their positions and not make any rash moves.

The two teams of horse thieves started making their way up, whooping shrilly, and causing anyone who heard them feel a cold shiver.

Halfway up the hill, the horse thieves split up and charged quickly forward.

The horse thieves at the forefront fell over, either falling into the pike holes or their horses tripped over the ropes, causing the men and horses to roll down the hill and knock into the

charging horse thieves behind. Under this chain reaction, more than half of the two teams of almost 200 men were either dead or injured.

The warriors cheered, their confidence greatly boosted.

Xiang Shaolong secretly thanked the good luck, knowing that the enemy lost because they were careless and over confident, that's why they fell into the trap. He hurriedly ordered everyone to move to the bottom of the slope and hide in the holes without the pikes and prepare their arrows to launch a third attack to the enemy.

A few hundred torches lighted up the surrounding area, throwing the whole hill into fiery brightness.

A burly man with huge graying beard walked out from among their enemy, sitting proudly on a horse. He pointed and shouted, "Those damned Zhao devils. If I, Hu Hui, allow anyone of you to die with an intact body, then I will retire immediately."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly berating the other party for being stupid. Once he said that, won't he be forcing his opponents to fight with all their might?

Xiang Shaolong felt that his arm is stronger than others, and shot an arrow towards Hui Hu. The light weighted arrow lost its momentum before it even reached its target and dropped about 10 meters away from Hui Hu. However, this is enough to cause apprehension among the horse thieves. Who has such incredible arm strength?

The warriors were secretly cheering, but none dared to make any noise, afraid that the enemy will find out their location.

The horn blew and the horse thieves all came down their horses and split into two groups to attack from all sides.

Horse thieves with shields and spears, who under the light of the torch, made their way carefully up the slope, led the first wave of attack, spoiling the trap that Xiang Shaolong had laid.

Behind them were archers, who kept shooting arrows towards the hill, covering the ascent of the men with spears. However they did not know that Xiang Shaolong is already hiding in the middle of the hill in a hole designed to avoid arrows.

By now all the warriors were impressed with Xiang Shaolong's prediction of the enemy's moves and their confidence soared.

By Xiang Shaolong's estimation, the enemy still has about 700 men who can fight. Even if they can get rid of the 400 odd men who are making their way up now, their enemy still outnumbered them greatly. Besides, there's no way they can kill all the troops who are advancing now without causing casualties to their own people. He had an idea, and instructed Li Shan, who was by his side, "When the fight starts later, bring 10 men to the horse enclosure immediately. When you hear the signal of three long and three short horns, break the enclosure immediately and let

the horses out. Let them charge down from the east, and then we'll escape from the west."

Li Shan immediately agreed and went to look for his partners.

By now the first batch of horse thieves have reached the midsection of the hill, slowly coming closer. The atmosphere was tense.

Hui Hu and the remaining of his 300 men sat on their horses at the east side arranging their formation. They rubbed their fists and palms, getting ready to charge up and kill.

This is the first time Xiang Shaolong is in such a situation, and his heart beat wildly for a moment. He ordered, "Release the rocks!"

The barrier of 10 odd piles of tree trunks and rocks, which were hidden behind the bushes and grass, was removed and they rolled down like waves, breaking the enemy's shields and causing them to fall.

Xiang Shaolong shouted, "Release the arrows." All the warriors who were hidden in the burrows immediately showed themselves and their arrows fell like rain. The enemy was in chaos and could not retaliate at all. They were struck by arrows and rolled down the hill, suffering another 200 odd casualties.

The morale of the warriors was greatly boosted and they cheered.

Hui Hu was jumping mad and after treating the injured men,

he immediately regrouped his men for the third attack.

Xiang Shaolong observed how the other party was moving and knew that they're putting their main force on the slope at the east. That area is not as steep and secretly thanking heaven for helping him, he ordered all the warriors to retreat up the hill.

There are advantages to having less men, the enemy will not be able to detect their movements so easily.

When they have all retreated up the hill, Xiang Shaolong told them to lead their horses and told them his plan. When the warriors heard that they can escape, their morale was boosted and they were all united, with no one making any objection. Until now, none of their men has been injured so naturally they think of Xiang Shaolong like a deity now.

The horn sounded, the horse thieves charged up again from all areas but most of the remaining 500 off horse thieves were coming up from the east.

Xiang Shaolong waited until the horse thieves were halfway up the hill before he ordered his man to sound the signal. Horses neighed and hooves drummed, a hundred odd wild horses were chased out of the enclosure and the warriors all hurriedly helped to steer the horses so that they ran madly down the eastern slope. They even used their long spears to poke the horses' buttocks so that they will become even wilder. Amidst the flying sand, the wild horses galloped down the slope, directly into the horse thieves who were on their way up.

Xiang Shaolong has no time to observe the outcome and leading his 50 warriors ran towards the western slope, running all the way down the safe path.

Only a hundred odd horse thieves met them, and because they were unprepared, they were quickly defeated.

Xiang Shaolong knows that his plan must be beyond the expectations of the enemy. Hui Hu does not know that all the women have been sent away, so he couldn't have imagined that only 51 riders were left to charge out of the siege.

The eastern slope may be in chaos, but the horse thieves from the other two sides all came to help and for a moment, the sounds of killing filled the air.

Although Xiang Shaolong had learnt to ride in the army, but he's naturally not as adept as the warriors and horse thieves who grew up on horseback. When they reached the foot of the hill, he's already lagging behind the other warriors, who thought that he is so brave as to risk his own life to cover their retreat.

By now only about 30 out of the 50 warriors remained, and they hurriedly escaped.

With his amazing arm strength, Xiang Shaolong killed a few horse thieves who were pursuing him with his spear. He was about to catch up with his team when he felt a sharp pain on his shoulder, shot by an arrow.

Xiang Shaolong roared and urged his horse to run faster. In

his haste he did not see where he is going at all, but only knows he must move forward quickly. In a short moment, he was all alone; riding forward in the vast plains.

The horse suddenly lost its footing and threw him off. He stumbled into the bushes and even the end of the arrow was snapped. The horse finally collapsed and died of exhaustion.

Xiang Shaolong felt his body getting weak and his head giddy, with a fiery pain behind his shoulder. His body was stained with fresh blood from the wound. He gritted his teeth and stood up. Taking the dagger Tao Fang gave him, he endured the extreme pain and cut out the flesh surrounding the arrowhead, and after that haphazardly bandaged the wound with his shirt.

He was parched, and knew that this is an indication of losing too much blood so he climbed up with much pain.

A ray of light shone from the eastern side of the plains. They have run the whole night, no wonder the horse could not take it any more. He looked at the horse in apology and continued on his way.

He walked for 20 odd days in the deserted wilderness. Xiang Shaolong experienced the most difficult journey in his whole life.

The first few days he depended on wild fruits to stave his hunger. Later when his wound gradually healed after he applied mashed herbs on it to prevent infection and inflammation, his strength returned and he hunted wild rabbits for food. He was disheveled and dirty with tattered

clothes.

Following Tao Fang's instructions, looking at the sun during the day and checking out the stars at night, he walked towards the direction of Handan. One day he came to the bottom of a huge mountain and looking at the tall and dangerous looking cliff, he had no choice but to walk around it. But he walked for more than 10 days and yet he was still walking around the winding mountain area. By the time he left the mountainous area, he was totally exhausted. Even his sword was broken and just as he was despairing; he found an official road outside the forest. He was overjoyed and bounded towards the road. By this time even his boots were torn.

On the way he met two groups of traders with a dozen men but when they saw his bedraggled look, they hurriedly moved away, totally ignoring him.

Xiang Shaolong sighed about the heartlessness of men. After walking for three more days, he reached another large city in the state of Zhao, Wu An, which is west of Handan.

By this time, the weather will turn cold at night, so cold that he'll be shivering. He wanted to go into the city but was chased out by the Zhao soldiers. He realized that all who enters the city must pay taxes and have their identities checked. The way he looked, like a beggar now, not to mention that he is penniless, there's no way he can enter the city.

Never did Xiang Shaolong imagine that he would become a

pest that no one wants. Luckily he has been through rigorous military training and was especially resilient. He did not give up but waited for a chance outside the city gates.

He decided that after gaining into the city, he have to get clothes, food and a horse even if he has to steal or swindle. And after he finds out the route to Handan, he'll go there immediately to look for Tao Fang so that he can end this painful existence.

That night he ate wild fruits to appease his hunger, huddled up in the forest next to the road, tolerating the biting cold night.

When the sun shone on him as the day broke, he finally fell asleep.

Without knowing how long he slept, he was suddenly jarred awake by the sound of carriage wheels.

He opened his eyes for a look, and it turned out to be a group who was carting sheep. He was ecstatic and when no one was noticing, he hid himself in the last sheep cart amongst the sheep and stole into the city.

This city of the State of Zhao during the Warring States Period has a lot of elderly with tall and large buildings. The place was crowded, but it seems that there are more females to makes. Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that this must be the after effect of Changping where the Qin generals killed 400,000 Zhao soldiers.

He was wondering if they have gigolos here, if there is, with

his ability, he'll be able to make the ladies happy. He can then earn enough for traveling expenses, a good horse and fresh clothes to Handan.

Once he thought about this, he himself felt that it's hilarious, and jumped off the cart.

Once the people on the street saw him, they all gave him despising looks.

Xiang Shaolong touched the beard on his face and almost wanted to cry. Before he came into the city, he had a purpose, which is to figure out how to come into the city. But now that he's really in the city, he is at a loss instead.

He felt ashamed of himself and turned into a deserted lane, but was discovered by a group of children who were playing in the courtyard. They ran after him and made fun of him as if he's a monster, and were so mischievous they even threw stones at him.

When he turned around to scare them, the dozen or so children immediately scattered. One little girl could not run away in time and fell down.

When Xiang Shaolong wanted to help her up, the little girl was so panicked that she wailed loudly.

Immediately a few adults holding knives, spears, rods etc. ran towards him with cries of murder.

CHAPTER 6
Leader Of The Mohist School
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG did not want to fight them, so he can only run away. He later ended up at a dilapidated and isolated temple, walked in there and sat cross legged, hidden in a corner.

What should he do? Why doesn't he go back to Mulberry Forest Village and look for Mei Canniang and live the rest of his life there. Once he thought of this, he really felt that heroes are short-lived.

Suddenly, there was someone else in the temple.

Xiang Shaolong looked over in surprise. It turns out to be a middle-aged man wearing linen clothes, his feet bare. No wonder he did not hear any footsteps.

That man was tall and well built, almost as tall as him, his features plain, and his expression calm. However his eyes were alert, and besides the cloth he bun his hair with, he wore no other accessories, looking a little like a monk on a pilgrimage.

The two of them eyed each other.

The man suddenly came towards Xiang Shaolong, squat down and asked, "Where did Brother come from?"

Xiang Shaolong did not know what the other party has on his mind, so he said, "I was on my way to Handan to visit my relatives but lost my way and ended up here. If Sir can tell me how to get to Handan, I'll be very grateful."

By now his accent and speech is about 70 to 80 percent similarity to how the people at that time talked.

The man smiled and said, "I'm not a sir, it's just that I saw that you're strongly built and good looking but although you ended up in such a state, you still have pride in your eyes, that's why I asked out of curiosity. Tell me, what are you good at?"

Xiang Shaolong was secretly cursing, but he has to find out the route to Handan so he swallowed his anger and replied, "I don't know anything, but I have brute strength. I'm not afraid of hard work or fighting."

That man smiled, "Do you know how to use a sword?"

Of course Xiang Shaolong nodded his head.

The man said calmly, "Come with me!"

He pushed open the back door of the temple and walked in.

In any case, Xiang Shaolong has no place to stay now, so he followed him in. Behind the door there's a world of its own. It's an abandoned courtyard with high walls surrounding the four sides with a dried up pond in the middle. On the other end is a small stone house.

That man walked out of the house with two wooden swords and threw one of them to Xiang Shaolong.

Xiang Shaolong was shocked when he caught hold of the sword. It's actually a few times heavier than his previous sword, the wood was black, and he wondered what kind of tree is it made from.

That man saw his look of surprise and said, "This is a heavy sword made from a 1000 year old pomegranate tree. Fine! Show me some attacks."

Xiang Shaolong waved the sword a little, shook his head and said, "No! I'm afraid I'll hurt you."

A look of appreciation shot through the man's eyes and he smiled, "If your sword can touch my clothes, I'll give you a detailed map to Handan as well as traveling expenses and clothes immediately."

Xiang Shaolong was shocked when he heard that and quietly

thought that this person is even more conceited than him. He laughed and said, "In that case I'll oblige."

He went forward and was five steps away from the person when he made a fake move. He leaned towards the left, then moved to the right, his sword sweeping over, force meeting force, using the strength in his arms to shake his opponent's wooden sword away.

Who would have expected that that person did not move at all, but just moved his wrist? Although he struck later, his sword reached his opponent first and slashed diagonally at his sword, and then the tip of the sword slid forward as if it's going to stab Xiang Shaolong's face.

Xiang Shaolong was startled and took a step back. His opponent's wondrous swordplay made it difficult for him to use his strength. He felt piqued and with a roar, leapt forward like a ferocious tiger. Continuously for seven moves, his danced madly with his sword like leaves falling on a strong, windy night, suddenly attacking the top or bottom, sweeping and chopping, attacking towards him.

The corner of the man's lips seems to curve up in a smile and yet he did not move, but no matter how he slashed, his opponent would just be able to block off his sword. His following sword moves were able to force him back, and there's no need for him to fight with him on strength. Although he only defended and did not attack, there's no way he can get close.

"Pak! Pak!"

The sound kept ringing in his ears.

When he was striking for the 72th time, Xiang Shaolong was finally exhausted. He stepped back and panted, looking at this gentleman in front of him incredulously.

That man exclaimed in surprise, "So you really do not know the art of swordplay, but only depended on your strength and nimbleness. But if an average swordsman was to meet you, he'll surely have difficulty fighting you."

Xiang Shaolong gave him back the sword dejectedly, and admitted his loss, "I admit I can't be compared to you. Hai! To think that I actually harbored the wish to roam the world. It turns out that a real swordsman can be so formidable. Farewell! I'll return to the mountains now and just live out the rest of my life."

When he finished his words, he really felt completely discouraged and thought about the era he is so familiar with. If they're dueling on marksmanship, he'll definitely be able to win this swordsman.

That man laughed, "From the way Brother's moves and talks, you're poor but yet you're not and your bearing is excellent. Obviously you're an upright and extraordinary person. Come! Have a bath and change into some clean clothes. I'll cook and we can have a good chat."

After eating two bowls of rice, Xiang Shaolong's spirit was restored.

The man saw that after he has shaved, combed his hair and

changed into linen clothes, Xiang Shaolong seemed to have changed into another person and his eyes revealed a look of admiration. He said smoothly, "Just now Brother said you wanted to make a name for yourself, I wonder what kind of name you are looking for?"

Xiang Shaolong was stunned for a moment, and replied with a little embarrassment, "I'm actually not too sure, but just taking things as they come. Now that I have clothes, I'm thinking of changing this dagger for some money, and it'll be best if I can buy a horse to bring me to Handan."

That man furrowed his brow and said, "A man in society all alone, how he can not have goals or aspirations. Only those who create opportunities are true heroes."

Xiang Shaolong was irked and asked, "What aspirations do you have then?"

That man smiled condescendingly and replied, "Very simple, this is to eliminate 'the greatest bane to the world', and to accomplish 'the greatest benefit to the world'."

Xiang Shaolong guffawed, "These sentences are so vague, what can be considered the greatest benefit and the greatest bane to the world?"

The man was not offended and said calmly, "The greatest bane of the world is like the strong preying on the weak, big states conquering small states. The intelligent suppressing the foolish. And the root to all these problems is because there's not enough love between people. If we can all love one another, hand over our possessions then we can all

share the wealth. There'll no longer be fights over jealousy, and accomplish the greatest benefit to the world."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed hoarsely, "So you're a believer of Mohism."

That man was baffled, "What is Mohism?"

Xiang Shaolong asked excitedly, "Is your grand-teacher Mo Zhai, his teachings are very famous, on the same standing as the Confucianism, Taoism and Legalism and it'll be passed on forever!"

That person was totally perplexed, but since he knows the name Mo Zhai, obviously he wasn't talking nonsense, so he nodded and said, "Mo Zhai is indeed our first Juzi, are you really from the villages?"

Xiang Shaolong asked, "What is Juzi? That I do not know."

That man thought for a while and explained, "Juzi is the leader of the 'Mohist Unit'. When we first started, we hoped to stop fights with fights, but we will only defend and not attack. A pity that the unit now has evolved greatly, and has split into three units, named after the place they are in, which is Qi Mo, Chu Mo and Zhao Mo. I am the previous Juzi, Meng Sheng's disciple and the purpose of my journey is to unify the three units again and fight for our dreams."

Xiang Shaolong asked solemnly, "Why are you telling me such a big secret?"

That man sighed and said, "Because I have the Juzi Token, so I thought it'll be an easy task to reunite the groups. But I did

not expect that when I found the leader of Zhao Mo in Handan, he'd actually send his men to kill me. Therefore I escaped to this place and felt that a single person will be weak and helpless, so I must gather all my men before I can have a chance of unifying the three Mo. So how can I lightly let off someone with character and skills like yours?"

Xiang Shaolong kept shaking his hands and said, "No way, I will not spill my blood over such illusionary and hopeless dream that will never come true. Hai! Trust me! The idealism of Mohism will never be fulfilled. Once wealth is equally distributed, you'll get a lot of useless people instead. There'll only be improvement if there's competition."

That man's body shook when he heard this, and closed his eyes, deep in thought.

Xiang Shaolong begged quietly, "Why don't you tell me how to get to Handan. As for giving me clothes and food, I, Xiang Shaolong, will never forget your kindness."

That man opened his eyes, a gleam shooting out of it and said with a smile, "Nothing in this world is free. Learn swordplay from me! The day you can defeat the wooden sword in my hand, will be when I'll accompany you to Handan. If you're a man, then agree to my request! Or else even if you can reach Handan, but once you meet a real swordsman, you'll still end up dead."

Xiang Shaolong thought that it sounded reasonable, and asked with hesitation, "You won't force me to join your unit, right!"

That man laughed, "Not only will I not force you to join, I can forget about accepting you as my disciple. We're just friends exchanging pointers on equal standing. My name is Yuan Zong; you can call me Brother Yuan if you like."

Therefore Xiang Shaolong lived in this temple, waking up before the cock crows to practice swordplay with Yuan Zong, and discussed with him ways to attack and defend.

Even Yuan Zong was impressed with the speed of his improvement and praised him. A month later, he was able to attack and defend in his duels with Yuan Zong.

Yuan Zong will leave the temple everyday, leaving Xiang Shaolong, who is now obsessed with swordplay, to practice on his own. At dusk, Yuan Zong would return with food.

Three months passed hurriedly like that.

This day, Yuan Zong returned only at night, his expression somber. He called him into the house and thought for a moment with furrowed brows before he said, "They've chased their way here."

Xiang Shaolong has now forged a deep friendship with him, and asked with concern, "Who is here?"

Yuan Zong sighed, "He is Zhao Mo's Yan Ping. I was able to escape only after I injured 18 of his men. What he wants is the Juzi Token I have, because with it, he can conveniently become Juzi."

He paused, then shook his head and said with a bitter smile, "What an irony, even within our own unit we are unable to

love everyone, and yet we talk about our ideals.”

Xiang Shaolong does not know how to console him.

Yuan Zong took out a square brass, with a single word ‘Mo’ on it. It looked like a big square seal. He gave this to Xiang Shaolong and said, “Take this token and run towards Handan immediately. I’ve drawn a map for you, and over the past few months I’ve earned enough for your traveling expenses. Leave quickly!”

CHAPTER 7
Rising Reputation
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG was extremely touched and he said determinedly, "No! We'll leave together!"

Yuan Zong smiled slightly and said, "Does Shaolong know why I wanted to teach you Mohism's unparalleled swordplay?"

Xiang Shaolong shook his head at a loss.

Yuan Zong explained, "I have traveled the various states and observed the people and in the end I changed my thinking. If we want the world to be at peace, the only way is to

eliminate the separation of the states, and let one ruler govern everyone. Only this and a person capable enough to unify the world can fulfill the idealism of Mohism and accomplish the greatest benefit to the world. And this person is you. That's why I taught you all I know."

Xiang Shaolong secretly sighed to himself, he knows that indeed there will be one person who will unify the world, and that is Emperor Qin. While he, Xiang Shaolong, is just someone who ingratiate powerful people, hoping to find the young Emperor Qin and fight with him so that he can enjoy fame and riches. He secretly felt guilty once he thought of this.

Yuan Zong saw him lowering his head and not talking, and thought that he has been deeply moved. He patted his shoulder and said, "If you're really grateful to me, then do as I say! All the men Yan Ping brought are expert swordsmen. And even if there's only a hundred odd of them, the two of us will not be able to handle them. I have tools for climbing the walls, I'll lure them away and you'll take the opportunity to escape. A man must not be hindered by small details if he wants to do something great. If you continue to be wishy-washy, both of us will lose our lives in vain. If the Juzi Token ends up in the hands of evil, I will not die in peace."

Xiang Shaolong reached out and took the Juzi Token, and it felt icy to the touch, obviously it's not made from ordinary brass. No wonder Yan Ping could not make a fake one. He sighed and said, "I really do not know what to say."

Yuan Zong laughed, "There's no need to be so pessimistic, it's not so easy for them to kill me. We may still have a chance to meet in future! There's a pair of shoes in the temple. Since you're not part of our clan, you need not walk barefooted. It'll be terrible if you step onto dog poop or something similar."

Xiang Shaolong can't help but burst out laughing, his tears rolling down his cheeks uncontrollably.

Suddenly a frightening thought crept into his mind.

If the despotic Emperor Qin, Ying Zheng was killed, how would history be changed?

That night Xiang Shaolong scaled past the city walls feeling grief and indignation as he left Wu An, knowing that he will never see Yuan Zong again.

This intelligent man with superb sword skill and lofty aspirations, after witnessing the disintegration of his own sect and how the Mohists became power hungry people, his motivation for saving the world died. He decided to sacrifice himself, hoping that his death can stir up Xiang Shaolong's blood so that he can use another method to fulfill his wish of accomplishing the greatest benefit to the world.

But how can Xiang Shaolong change China's history on his own? He's not Emperor Qin. But can he influence Ying Zheng, like how Yuan Zong influenced him?

Will the change be a bane or bonus to China?

The sun set and the moon rose, the stars changed. Without

knowing how many days have passed, he finally reached the heavily guarded walls of the outskirts of Handan.

During this journey, he was totally immersed in the sword play that Yuan Zong taught him, which originated from one of the best master of the time, Mo Zhai. He also included modern society's most horrible assault tactics from somatic psychology and mechanics into the sword play. With such a task at hand, he forgot about time. Sometimes he'll stay more than a dozen days in the wilderness, staving his hunger by hunting wild beasts with the bow and arrows he made. His physique became even stronger under such harsh conditions.

He had wanted to steal into Handan, but once he saw the tight security, he has no choice but to walk obediently to the pass and told the guards the great name of Tao Fang's boss, 'King of Livestock' Master Wu.

The guard stood immediately at attention and went to look for an officer to see him.

After the young officer eyed him for a moment, he asked, "What is your name?"

Xiang Shaolong replied truthfully, "I'm Xiang Shaolong."

The expressions on the officer as well as the 10 odd Zhao soldiers surrounding them changed.

The officer barked, "Bold miscreant, how dare you impersonate a hero. He has already perished heroically half a year ago while saving his comrades in the battle with the

horse thieves. I have a friend who saw with his own eyes that he blocked the pursuing men on his own.”

Xiang Shaolong was shocked, he did not expect that he'd become so famous. He let the Zhao soldiers apprehend him without a struggle, and said with a laugh, “What is the name of your friend?”

The officer said a name, and Xiang Shaolong hurriedly gave a description of that person's looks and build.

By now someone took out from his clothes the dagger Tao Fang gave him. The officer no longer has any doubts once he saw it, and his attitude changed immediately. After asking what happened that day, and at the same time sent a man to report this matter to Tao Fang, who is in Handan immediately, he personally escorted him to the capital of Zhao.

That officer is called Ning Xin, and as he rode next to him, he said, “Master Wu is one of the most respected men in Handan. If not for him going around buying war horses, and donating to the country's coffer time to time, I'm afraid our State of Zhao would have been destroyed long ago. Now the Yans have come to attack us, luckily our two great generals Lian Po and Le Cheng eliminated all of them and attacked Yan instead. How fantastic!”

Xiang Shaolong very much wanted to ask why since there are more females to males in Zhao. They still wanted to go all over the place to look for beauties. However, he's afraid the other party will feel embarrassed and controlled himself

from asking the question.

Amidst the talk and laughter, Handan appeared ahead.

Compared to Wu An, Handan is at least three to four times bigger, the river protecting the city is wide and deep, with tall and thick city walls, and it has the power to withhold ten thousand men with just one man. There were two camps of Zhao soldiers outside the city, extending to a fair distance, with a sea of banners, the scene enough to strike fear in anyone. Outside the tower, it was filled with sentries, with their swords drawn and the atmosphere tense.

Before they went into the city, a group of riders rushed out, and the person leading them is Tao Fang, whom he has not seen for a long time. The remaining were all his comrades who went through life and death with him, with Li Shan being one of them.

When they met, naturally there was surprise all around, and Tao Fang and the warriors went into the city with him happily.

Xiang Shaolong can't help but asked, "Is Ting Fangshi well?"

Tao Fang's expression turned somber, and he said apologetically, "I'm sorry! I thought that Shaolong has died at the hands of those thieves, and after waiting for three months, I followed the Master's order and gave her to someone to become a courtesan dancer."

He continued with a smile, "But don't you worry, I'll specially choose another two beauties who are prettier than her to

serve you.”

Xiang Shaolong felt as if he was punched in the chest, and he turned pale. It was only a moment later that he was able to ask, “Who was she given to?”

Tao Fang was secretly startled; he did not imagine that such a handsome and flirtatious man like him would actually have feelings for a bought woman. He sighed, “Sorry, I can’t tell you, Shaolong...”

Xiang Shaolong said furiously, “Don’t say further, if it has not been proven that I’m dead, you should not have given her away.”

Tao Fang hid his feelings well, there was no trace of unhappiness at all and said, “Shaolong, go and have a rest and a bath first, I’ll help you think of a way. The Master will come and see you personally tomorrow. This is the greatest honor the warriors in our household can have, so don’t miss the opportunity.”

Xiang Shaolong’s excitement was totally extinguished, and just roamed around the streets like a walking corpse, not interested in the grand buildings surrounding him at all. His mood was at the lowest point.

Without his protection, will this pitiful woman land from the hands of one devil to another?!

Is she being defiled right now by some other men?

Just as he was feeling despondent, Tao Fang gave him a push, telling him to stand to the side with them.

Xiang Shaolong was slightly awoken, and looking up the street, he saw the pedestrians and horse carriages all moving to one side, letting a grand looking horse carriage protected by 20 odd riders move past.

Tao Fang said into his ears, "This is the carriage of King Xiaocheng's sister, Lady Ya. She is a famous beauty in Handan, and married to Zhao Kuo but a pity he died in the battle of Chang Ping."

The carriage slowed down, and suddenly stopped in front of them.

Just as everyone was still startled, a soldier rode over and invited Tao Fang over. Tao Fang was surprised and hurriedly came down from his horse and walked over to the lowered carriage curtain. After talking with Lady Ya, the horse carriage moved away. Tao Fang bowed as he sent them off before returning to his men. He smiled mysteriously at Xiang Shaolong, but did not reveal the contents of their conversation.

Xiang Shaolong reached the guesthouse and stayed in a solitary house. Tao Fang especially sent four pretty maids to help him bath and change. That night, he set up a feast with 21 tables at the great hall in the main building of the guesthouse and besides the warriors who fought with him that day, there were Master Wu's other capable assistants as well. There were dances and performances to entertain the guests and the atmosphere was celebratory.

But Xiang Shaolong thought of Ting Fangshi and Mei

Canniang whom he has not met for a long time, and remembered the friends and family from his own era whom he may never meet again, and can only drown his sorrow in drinks. He was absolutely drunk and totally concussed even before the feast ended. In his daze, he seems to feel that Ting Fangshi has returned to him, and together they soared among the clouds.

When he woke up, he was lying on the carpet in the bedroom, the sunlight shining in from the window.

Sleeping next to him was a naked beauty, but she's not one of the four pretty maids.

There's not a flaw at all on her exquisite face, with distinctive outlines, and unbelievably sweet. She's definitely younger than 18, her black lustrous hair spread onto the blanket, in contrast to her fair skin and ruby lips, and her snow white arms really tugs at one's heart.

The beauty looked like a flower sleeping in spring, there seems to be tears on her pretty face, but she's also filled with the peace and satisfaction after a violent thunderstorm, emanating a soul-capturing brilliance.

Xiang Shaolong secretly exclaimed 'oh my god', what has he done to this young girl who is even prettier than Ting Fangshi and Mei Canniang?

He can't help but quietly lift the blanket higher.

The gleaming hair of youth, a body perfectly proportionate, the beautiful scenery of breathing peaks appeared before his

eyes. It seems that there were some remnants of a red stain beneath the tender and smooth long legs with the beautifully rounded buttock.

Xiang Shaolong was shocked and put the blanket back.

The tears on her face must be related to this. He was drunk and muddleheaded last night, and has not touched a woman for almost half a year and actually mistook her for Ting Fangshi and was reckless with her. How can an inexperienced and tender young girl take it, no wonder she cried from the pain. He felt very apologetic, but it's too late now.

Xiang Shaolong stood up and walked to the window and looked out. He saw two of the pretty maids watering the plants in the garden and when they saw Xiang Shaolong, they curtsied shyly, yet they can't help stealing glances at his magnificent body.

One of the maids said, "Master is awake, I'll bring you a wash basin and help you dress up immediately."

Behind him he heard the soft moan of the beauty who was shocked awake.

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly told the two maids, "Hold on!"

The pretty maid was very understanding and she covered her smiling mouth and said, "If Master would like me to serve you, please call me anytime. Heh! My name is Chunying, her name is Xiaying, and the other two are Qiuying and Dongying. It's so easy to remember, I guess

Master won't forget!"

Xiang Shaolong was concerned with the beauty behind him, so he smiled and said, "Once I see the two of you, I won't forget for the rest of my life."

And he turned around.

The beauty whose chastity was just taken by him sat up, the blanket sliding down to her waist, revealing her firm upper body. She lowered her head shyly, not daring to look at his face, and in a sweet and melodious voice said, "Shu'er pays her respects to Master!"

Xiang Shaolong felt sorry for her and sat next to her. He held her petite chin with his hand and lifted her pretty face.

Her large and lively eyes immediately lowered once they came into contact with his gaze, her heart beating like a running deer. They way she looked, shy yet happy, the allure of a young girl is indeed dazzling to the eyes and takes one's senses away.

Without hesitation, Xiang Shaolong is sure that she is the most attractive woman he has ever encountered, and was secretly thinking that Tao Fang is really formidable to give such a pretty girl to him so that he will work for him. He asked gently, "Is it still painful?"

Shu'er shook her head, then she nodded her head shyly, her blushing cheeks immediately spread, until her ears and neck were burning as well.

Xiang Shaolong immediately had the most primitive reaction,

and Shu'er's lowered gaze happened to look at it directly and she was so shocked her body shivered, and she stuttered, "Master..."

Xiang Shaolong knows that right now she will certainly be unable to withstand a second storm, so he gently kissed her small lips, lightly nibbling the tip of her tongue, then kissing her eyes and face, followed by her neck and chest. Only when her whole body started trembling did he let her go and said with a smile, "There's no need to be afraid. I was muddleheaded after drinking last night, but I won't be so violent in future. Have a good sleep now!"

Shu'er looked at him invitingly and said breathlessly, "No! Shu'er wants to serve Master."

Xiang Shaolong asked with concern, "Can you stand up?"

Shu'er's slender hand pressed down on his broad shoulder, thinking of using him as support to kneel up first, but her dainty brows rose and she sat back down again, her cheeks burning.

Xiang Shaolong is used to being flirtatious and on seeing such alluring movements from her, can't help but reach out and fondle her chests before laying her back on the carpet and covering her with the blanket. Just as he was about to leave, Shu'er suddenly pulled his hand.

Xiang Shaolong looked at her in surprise.

Shu'er asked shyly, "Does Master still want Shu'er now?"

Xiang Shaolong reached out and caressed her face, saying

with a smile, "I only want you to take a good rest now. Tonight I'll let you become the happiest and luckiest woman in the world."

And he suddenly remembered Ting Fangshi and felt tightness in his chest.

Shu'er used all her strength to grab hold of him, her gaze meeting with his bravely, and said with feelings, "Last night Shu'er has already become the luckiest and happiest woman. I will never forget that ecstatic pain."

Xiang Shaolong can't help but kissed her hardly again, and even reached inside the blankets, delicately touching her lower body and slender legs, making her delirious before he left for the hall.

The four maids walked towards him and served him meticulously. The tallest among them, Chunying said, "Master Tao is here, and he's waiting for Master in the hall now."

CHAPTER 8

Master Red Crown

[Translated by JEAN]

WHILE he was enjoying the earthly pleasures, Xiang Shaolong's mind was in a turmoil.

When he arrived here, everything felt surreal, like a dream. The era he sees before him has got nothing to do with him at all, so he went all out to enjoy himself without feeling any pressure from the society or the people, because he may suddenly be captured by Crazy Ma's machine and be sent back to the 21st century.

He's like a child who does not need to take up any

responsibility at all.

But after suffering from injuries and his wanderings, this dreamy world suddenly turned into real flesh and blood.

The martyrdom of Yuan Zong, the sufferings of Ting Fangshi, various setbacks, all threw him deeper and deeper into this world mentally and spiritually.

Although he enjoys beauties and riches now, but he lost his most treasured freedom and independence.

In this warring states period, nothing is more valuable than a talent. One legalist Li Ke and one strategist Wu Qi, is enough to make the state of Wei a strong state immediately. Shang Yang is even more formidable; he single-handedly made the state of Qin the biggest threat to all the states in the east.

And the Xiang Shaolong now, because he stopped an army of almost a thousand ferocious horse thieves with fifty men, has also become a talent.

The various states only have two attitudes towards talent, either to keep for their own use, or to kill without mercy to prevent them from being a powerful opponent in future.

Right now Master Wu is trying to bribe Xiang Shaolong, using riches and beauties to make him sink deeper in. Therefore if he were to reveal even a little about his intention to look for Emperor Qin, Ying Zheng, he can be sure that he'll lose his life immediately.

To try and escape from such heavily guarded city walls is akin to a fool's dream. If Ying Zheng's father did not have the

help of Lu Buwei, a wealthy trader similar to Master Wu, he can forget about escaping back to the capital of Qin, Xian Yang.

Even if he can find Emperor Qin, there's no way he can get him out of the city.

Will he have to work for the Zhaos indefinitely? If Master Wu asked him to kill people from other states, what should he do?

Xiang Shaolong sighed and walked towards the hall to see Tao Fang.

Tao Fang was hugging a pretty maid in his arms, his hands roaming over her. He released her when he saw him, and warmly invited him to take a seat and to join in the scrumptious breakfast.

Tao Fang smiled slyly, "Shaolong you don't know how much the Master likes you. Shu'er is a famed beauty from a noble family in the State of Yan, who was given to Master by the ruler of Yan. It's obvious that he thinks of you highly since he is willing to give her to you."

Xiang Shaolong asked in surprise, "Aren't we at war with the State of Yan?"

Tao Fang was obviously very impressed by his choice of word 'we', and said frankly, "If we're not at war, why would the ruler of Yan be willing to present such a beautiful virgin. It's precisely because he's not doing well in the war, so he's trying to bribe our Master with such a huge gift, hoping that

our Master will help put in some good words for him in front of our King. Hei! Now Master has given the Yan beauty to you, so it's obvious that he will not help speak up for the Yans."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought to himself that this is such a complicated situation, and changed the subject to ask about Ting Fangshi.

Tao Fang smiled mysteriously, "I've spoken to Master about this, he'll certainly give you an answer, so don't worry! As long as you have more accomplishments, the King would even give you his Princess, much less a dancer."

Xiang Shaolong thought that things are not going well, but he had no choice at all. This feeling of being controlled by others is extremely frustrating.

Tao Fang added, "Now I'll take you to the Wu's Mansion to meet Master, don't accept any invitations from your beloved brothers tonight. There's someone who wants to meet you, but I cannot reveal to you now who that person is."

Xiang Shaolong's heart lurched, and he remembered that Lady Ya who was hiding behind the curtains of the horse carriage.

The Wu's Mansion was the grandest building north of the city, it might even be more appropriate to call it a castle. Tall and thick walls surround it with a moat going around, and the only entrance is a large drawbridge. There are no residential areas outside the walls, only gardens. The grandeur of the place exceeds even that of nobility.

During the journey there, it was the first time Xiang Shaolong really took notice of the people, the things in the city and the buildings. If not for the obvious fact that there are more women to men, it's not easily detected that this prosperous city has just experienced war, and was even conquered by the Weis for two years.

According to Fang Tao, excluding the soldiers, there are about 100,000 families; each family has between a dozen to a few hundred people. Therefore this huge city has an estimated population of over a million people.

Inside the city there were farms, paddy fields and warehouses, so if they are being besieged, those in the city can still be self sufficient for a long time.

Xiang Shaolong followed Tao Fang and went into a side door past the drawbridge into the Wu's Mansion huge property.

After they went in the main gate, there was enormous training field large enough for a few thousand people, and an imposing huge mansion was facing the gate at the other end. Houses lined both sides of the mansion, and it seems that one day is not enough to tour the whole place.

There were a few hundred people on the training ground separated into groups practicing swordplay, horse riding, archery, and some were even wearing newly made armor and letting others hit them with various weapons to test the sturdiness. But the most exciting place seems to be the archery field, with almost a hundred warriors watching from the side, giving out thunderous cheers once in a while.

Tao Fang's expression suddenly looked awkward.

Xiang Shaolong unconsciously walked nearer, and saw that the archer is a heroic looking young man wearing a red crown, a yellow warrior's robe with a dragon sewn on it and black leather warrior's boots.

He's almost the same height as Xiang Shaolong, maybe an inch or half inch shorter, extremely well built, muscular and full of charisma.

His eyes were shining, his forehead high and wide. His eyes and nose straight, his lips pursed into a line, with an indescribable air of arrogance and confidence.

Such a handsome and suave man is truly rarely seen.

Sitting on his horse, he placed his arrow on an especially large bow. The hand that pulled the string of the bow was holding another two arrows as well.

The string of the bow clanged thrice in quick succession.

The three arrows went one after the other, shooting out like a meteor. The first arrow struck the bull's eye of the target about 200 steps away, and the two other arrows shot right into the first arrow successively.

The audience was totally enthralled and cheered.

Xiang Shaolong was dumbstruck at the sight. He would not have believed such out of the world archery skill if he had not seen it with his own eyes.

Tao Fang whispered into his ear, "This 'Master Red Crown'

Lian Jin is recruited by my nemesis Wu Hei. Regardless of swordplay, horse riding or archery, he's the best in the mansion. This time I lost more than a hundred horses and Wu Hei is already spreading tales in front of Master. Luckily I now have Shaolong, so I managed to save a bit of face, but Wu Hei and Lian Jin will not let us off."

When he finished his words, his expression looked pained.

Xiang Shaolong sucked in a breath of cool air. His swordplay may be comparable to this Lian Jin now, but as for riding and archery he is far behind. He was just about to reply when he saw a white cloud floating out from amongst the audience. A lady with incomparable beauty dressed in white, with figure slightly better than Shu'er's ran excitedly towards Lian Jin and spoke to him intimately. Lian Jin immediately handed the large bow in his hand to someone and spoke to her politely. His grace is indeed enough to enchant any beauty.

Xiang Shaolong's breathing stopped, and he sighed appreciatively, "This must be our state's most beautiful lady."

Tao Fang sighed, "This is our Master's most beloved granddaughter, Miss Wu Tingfang. She's a little interested in Lian Jin, but Master seems to have the intention of marrying her into the royal family and Lian Jin is worried about that now. Come! Master is waiting for us."

The two of them left the crowd and walked towards the great mansion.

Someone shouted from behind, "Master Tao please slow

down!”

The two of them turned around in surprise.

That Lian Jin came towards them from the crowd, following behind him is the rare beauty Wu Tingfang.

Xiang Shaolong can't help but look at Wu Tingfang, his eyes made contact with her lively and mischievous eyes, and he felt his heart beating wildly.

Heavens! She looks even prettier than a flower, unparalleled in her beauty when seen up close.

When seen from afar earlier he only noticed her chest, waist and legs etc, and already he felt that she's a little better than Shu'er, but she looks even more outstanding when seen close up. The unhidden freshness seems to gush towards him, taking one's breath away. Even though Xiang Shaolong had always prided himself on being a flirt, but now on seeing her he began to feel unworthy.

Like a cottonrose emerging from the clear pond, like nature's carving.

Her natural beauty seems to be made from the tools of the gods, her shoulder carved with a knife, her waist bounded by silk, her neck long and tender, her skin smooth and white, her bright eyes looking around prettily, her dimples sunken in a slight smile, her hair that floated like the clouds, with a jade green hairpin in it, wearing a warrior's clothes with pearls decorating it, her feet wearing tiny calfskin boots, looking exactly like a fairy who came from heaven.

Wu Tingfang saw him staring at her and showed her unhappiness.

Xiang Shaolong was startled from his daze and immediately looked at Lian Jin.

Lian Jin was sizing him up coldly, his expression none too polite.

Tao Fang is a wily old fox indeed and hurriedly introduced the two of them.

Wu Tingfang said coldly, "Oh! So you're Xiang Shaolong, Grandfather is very impressed with you!"

Lian Jin moved a little closer to Wu Tingfang, to show his familiarity with this beauty, and said with a smile, "I am also very impressed with Brother Xiang, why don't we find a good day and exchange some pointers, and let me see the divine sword that can block an army of 800 horse thieves."

Xiang Shaolong can tell that although his words sounded polite, but it was full of sarcasm, hinting that Tao Fang had been exaggerating about this matter and he was secretly upset. He was thinking that if he can have a freestyle boxing match with this conceited man, he'll surely beat him up until his head is swollen like a pig. But if the competition is on other things, then he'd better avoid it if possible, so he can only smile humbly and replied, "Brother Lian's archery skills is unparalleled, I cannot be compared to you. I'm not qualified enough to exchange pointers with Brother Lian, but would hope that Brother Lian can give some advise when you're free."

When Wu Tingfang thought that they were going to have a duel, she was quite excited but once she heard his reply, she was disappointed and chided him, "Coward!"

Before turning around and leaving.

Lian Jin is obviously very satisfied with Wu Tingfang's reaction, and he looked heavenward and laughed, "Brother Xiang really disappoints me, in that case I shall not make things difficult for Brother Xiang!"

He turned around and ran after Wu Tingfang.

Xiang Shaolong was feeling calm instead, and with a nonchalant laugh, continued walking with Tao Fang towards the huge mansion.

Tao Fang nodded his head, "It's good to tolerate for the time being. Shaolong may be highly skilled, but I'm afraid you're still not his match."

He continued with a low voice, "That lad has been going around Handan looking for people to duel with him, and everyone is scared of him after a few fights. I really hope someone can take him down a peg or two."

Xiang Shaolong knows that he's trying to instigate him, so he smiled and said, "If Master Tao can make it such that there's no restrictions in my duel with him, I am 70% confident that I can teach him a good lesson."

Tao Fang exclaimed happily, "That's easy. Let me find a suitable location for Shaolong to show off your ability. How I wish I can see that Wu Hei's expression immediately."

CHAPTER 9
Never-Ending Hatred
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG finally saw Master Wu at the side hall, this person who is not of the nobility, but has the powers of a nobility, controlling the economy of the state of Zhao, the extremely wealthy man who earned his fortunes from keeping livestock.

Xiang Shaolong has never seen a man more grand than him. Just the crown on his head was encrusted with two rows of 12 glittering purple jewels of similar size. This rich merchant is large and fat, like a mountain of flesh

lying horizontally on the seat, in the arms of a beauty who was cleaning his ears. Another four females were carefully filing his fingernails and toenails. Such an ostentatious display, even the emperor may pale in comparison.

The yellow silk robe he wore was twined with dazzling pearls with an air of luxury. The belt around his waist was stunningly bright, with gold and silver pieces reflecting off one another.

He was on a raised platform, about three floors high, and below the platform there were 18 warriors standing in two rows. Any coward who witnesses such a display would have been scared out of his wits.

When Xiang Shaolong and Tao Fang knelt down to pay their respects, Master Wu sat up and dismissed his maids. His thin and long eyes opened, looking at Xiang Shaolong piercingly, and after sizing him for a moment, said with a cold snort, "Xiang Shaolong, why didn't you accept Lian Jin's challenge. Is it because you don't live up to your reputation at all, but only relied on your commanding looks?"

Xiang Shaolong was shocked.

Tao Fang was about to speak up.

Master Wu gave a loud shout and raised his hand to signal Tao Fang to shut up. His face was already swollen with flesh, and now his features are all scrunched up even more tightly together in the middle of his face and he said with displeasure, "Lian Jin may be a valuable talent, but he's still from the state of Wei, and not from our state. That's why I

specially ordered him to challenge you so that we Zhaos can show off our prowess. Now that you backed down from the challenge, what else do you have to say?"

Xiang Shaolong was secretly cursing him, but he said without arrogance or servility, "What Shaolong learnt was for killing, and not for such games such as exchanging pointers."

Master Wu laughed icily, "What's the difference between the two."

By now Xiang Shaolong has figured out the character of this rich merchant of livestock, and said haughtily, "The way to kill is to use all methods, to be ruthless, to kill the enemy at all costs. But exchanging pointers in a duel, is just to see whose swordplay is more beautifully executed, it's more a game than a battle, so naturally it's another matter altogether."

Master Wu's expression warmed slightly, but he was still not satisfied, and said each word clearly, "I can't possibly ask you to kill a few of my men just like that, so how do I know if you're really that capable?"

Xiang Shaolong's eyes gleamed and stared back at him without fear. He said with a slight smile, "Since Master has such expectations of me, I will have a duel with Lian Jin, but there must not be any rules on my methods of winning him."

Master Wu stared at him for a while before bursting out into laughter and said, "Very interesting child. His Majesty has always wished that a Zhao would be able to humiliate Lian Jin and help our state of Zhao regain some face. Fine! Then

let me arrange a feast, if you can defeat Lian Jin in front of his Majesty, I'll give Fang Tingshi back to you."

Xiang Shaolong knelt down happily, secretly thinking that if he doesn't beat Lian Jin up like how he thrashed Black Faced Deity, he'll write his name Xiang Shaolong backwards.

Master Wu and Tao Fang looked at each other, extremely baffled at his joy and confidence.

Could it be that he really thinks that he can defeat the unparalleled Lian Jin?

They have just returned to the guest house and Xiang Shaolong was about to slip away to find Shu'er when he bumped into Li Shan and two warriors who is quite close to him at the main door and they dragged him out to celebrate his return.

The four of them roamed the streets happily, flirting with the beauties they saw, thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Li Shan said with a laugh, "Handan's beauties are famous for being easy to woo, with Brother Xiang's capabilities, you only have to hook your fingers and I guarantee all the beauties will queue up for Brother Xiang to choose from."

The warrior called Han Dong added, "But Brother Xiang need not find women on the streets today; we've especially found some sweet ladies to accompany you."

Another warrior Zha Bei put his arms around his shoulder and said, "Don't ever think that we're finding some used goods as obligations. We've specially prepared for Brother

Xiang the noble daughter of a high-ranking officer, who is outstandingly beautiful. She can only blame her father for antagonizing the Emperor, so she was demoted to become a prostitute for officials. I guarantee that Brother Xiang will be satisfied.”

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows when he heard that, and began to understand why Yuan Zong wanted to change this world. Ai! But how can he have the capability to fulfill his dream. What he can do is to give these ill fated women who have become prostitutes a little more gentleness and love, and by the time he thought of that, he was already pushed into a grand mansion by the other three.

A skinny man of about 40 wearing a splendid outfit welcomed them, “Welcome Master Xiang, Sirs please come to the guest room on the second floor.”

The four of them sat down on the rug in the room, and after the maids sent in wine and dishes, a procuress by the name of Hong Niangzi came is. Although she’s middle-aged, but she took great care in dolling up, and her figure is still well maintained. Coupled with her intoxicating style, she’s still able to stir some blood. On seeing such a handsome man like Xiang Shaolong, she was especially warm in her welcome and said with a coquettish smile, “The lady will be here immediately to accompany Master Xiang, would Master Li and the rest want to try someone fresh.”

Li Shan and the rest agreed with a laugh and Hong Niangzi went out of the room with her plush hips swaying.

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that it's no wonder that prostitution is the oldest occupation in the world, and it's always the same method and atmosphere. But why is it that in the past when he was in the bars going after the beer ladies, he never felt his conscience pricking, but now he kept feeling this is not quite appropriate?

The sounds of jewelry clinking can be heard from the corridor outside, followed by the whiff of a fragrance and three pretty young ladies wearing thin gauzes walked in with a smile. They sat in the arms of Li Shan and the rest, but were making eyes at Xiang Shaolong; obviously they were more interested in him.

By now Hong Niangzi has brought in a tall, slim and fair lady, who looked extremely pretty and bright, with a graceful air about her. Indeed she looked extremely pure.

Li Shan and the rest stared, looking greedily at the magnificent scenery beneath her thin veil of clothes.

Hong Niangzi laughed, "I did not lie to you, right? Good daughter, have you ever seen a better looking and loving man than Master Xiang?"

The beauty lowered her eyes sadly, refusing to lift her head up at all.

Xiang Shaolong couldn't bear to see this and was about to say something when Hong Niangzi pushed her into her arms, sitting on his lap.

The thighs touching his, a wave of intoxication spread over

him, and the well-proportioned body covered by a thin veil, seemingly revealing the luscious bosom, made Xiang Shaolong's eyes blurry. He can't help but hug her tiny waist and took a sniff of her face.

Su Nu lowered her head and did not speak.

Hong Niangzi made eyes at Xiang Shaolong, walked behind him and leaned over, pressing her bosom tightly into his back, going between the two of them and said softly, "Master Xiang is the lady's first customer. If not for the fact that Master Li used the name of Master Wu, I wouldn't have let this good girl accompany Master Xiang before her training is done. Because of this, if Su Nu has offended you in any way, Master Xiang please forgives her."

And she left with a smile.

Xiang Shaolong looked at the lady's slender fingers, listening to how Li Shan and the rest were teasing her, and he felt a rush of anger in his chest. He whispered gently into the Su Nu's ears, "Don't worry! I won't be disrespectful towards you like them. We'll just chat and drink, all right?"

Su Nu was stunned for a moment, and finally lifted her head up to look at this strange man who is being so intimate with her.

Xiang Shaolong smiled at her.

Su Nu blushed and immediately lowered her head, but she's no longer so afraid. She can't help but steal another glance at him, and her heart started beating wildly, thinking to

herself that this man is really good looking. And it's rare that his gaze looked so upright and honorable. Oh heavens! Why did she have to meet a man like that only at a place like this?

Xiang Shaolong felt his desire rising as well, but once he thought of his promise, he hurriedly suppressed his fire.

Su Nu gritted her teeth, raised her head and looked at him shyly and said, "I thank Master for your kind intentions. Master need not feel pity that I have been reduced to such a situation, besides there's no use in pity as well. Anyone here can tease me at will."

Xiang Shaolong felt sadness in his heart and sighed.

Su Nu was perplexed and she hugged his neck, asking, "Master seems to be troubled!"

Xiang Shaolong looked at Li Shan and the rest, and saw that those three men's hands and mouth were already roaming around the ladies in their arms, totally engrossed in doing various unspeakable things. He said with a bitter smile, "I only wish to leave now, and have no wish to witness further the sad things that happened in this world."

Su Nu was surprised and exclaimed, "Master's thinking is really different from the others. All the men that came here have never thought of our sadness and pain."

She continued quietly, "I'm not lying to Master, but now I really hope that Master will be impolite to me, just like that three friends of yours."

This time it was Xiang Shaolong's turn to be surprised, "Why

would you think that?"

Su Nu said shyly, "Maybe I'm affected by them, and my desires have been flamed, or maybe I have fallen in love with Master. I'm not sure myself!"

The girl Li Shan was hugging stood up at this point in time and said breathlessly, "The night is short, why don't we go up to our own rooms for more fun. Brother Xiang must not forget Master Tao's appointment tonight."

Just as they were about to step out of the room, Hong Niangzi came in looking miserable and said, "Sirs, I am in a difficult position!"

Li Shan was extremely surprised, and pulled the official courtesan to sit on the rug and asked in bafflement, "Hong Niangzi is in charge of the official courtesans in Handan, who would dare to make things difficult for you. Just tell us, and we will settle it for you."

Hong Niangzi looked at Li Shan with a little disdain, and turned towards Xiang Shaolong and said, "I don't know who leaked the news; Prince Shaoyuan just came with a dozen or so of his men to the official brothel and demanded that I hand Su Nu to him."

The expression on Li Shan and the rest changed; obviously this Prince Shaoyuan is someone so powerful that even they cannot afford to offend him.

Su Nu went "Ah!"

Her pretty face turned pale, her body shook, like a little lamb

waiting to be slaughtered.

Hong Niangzi sighed and said, "No one in Handan now can afford to offend Prince Shaoyuan. We can only blame Su Nu's beauty for being so famous. Su Nu, come with me!"

Su Nu screamed, "No!" and hugged Xiang Shaolong in a death grip as she stood up crying, making others pity her even more so.

Li Shan and Han Dong exchanged looks helplessly and explained to Xiang Shaolong, "Prince Shaoyuan is the son of Prince Pingyuan, who passed away last year and the family's power has been passed to him. Even our Master has to be careful of him and his Majesty has been protecting him on account of Prince Pingyuan. If we were to clash with him, we may not be able to win the swordsmen under him, and even if we did, Master will not forgive us. Brother Xiang, we did not expect such a killjoy would happen as well."

Xiang Shaolong hugged Su Nu's burning and helpless body, hot blood rushing through him and said with a cold snort, "A man has to be responsible for his own actions. You will leave immediately, and you won't know what happened."

The expression on the three changed.

Hong Niangzi quite liked Xiang Shaolong, so on hearing that she sighed, "Master Xiang is indeed a hero, but is it worth it to end your future and life thus? Prince Shaoyuan only wants Su Nu's virginity; won't it be the same if Master Xiang comes a little later to look for Su Nu?"

Li Shan and the rest tried to dissuade him as well.

Su Nu suddenly gave a hard kiss on Xiang Shaolong's lips, a look of resolution on her face and whispered in his ear, "Don't worry! Su Nu is going."

She stood up, her expression wooden and told Hong Niangzi, "I will follow you!"

After taking a loving look at Xiang Shaolong, she walked slowly away.

Hong Niangzi sighed and ran after her.

Xiang Shaolong punched the pillar, the wood shattered. Anger rising up inside him.

This is an era where power is reason. On when riding on others can one have control over their own fate and protect the woman one loves.

Looking at it from another angle, he's only another kind of prostitute, selling his wits and skills.

The rest may have patriotic ideals and are willing to lay down their lives, but he, Xiang Shaolong will never follow orders from anyone blindly. Because half a year ago he is not even related to this era at all.

What Yuan Zong said was correct, only when all the states are unified, will there be a chance for everything to be changed and an ideal system will appear.

And the most important task now is to establish his position in the Wu family, there's no other way besides this.

By now, their mood totally spoiled, the four of them left hurriedly.

Xiang Shaolong had just stepped into the garden at the guest house when he felt the strange atmosphere. Two warriors were standing guard outside the main door, and he seemed to hear Shu'er's cries from inside the house.

Xiang Shaolong was still fuming, and he's not someone kind or religious, but forced by circumstances to bear with that bully Prince Shaoyuan. Now that someone is trying to climb over his head, he dashed into the door like a mad tiger.

The two warriors snickered and extended their hands to stop him.

Xiang Shaolong roared madly and forced his way between the two men, elbows and knees striking and the two of them fell down screaming immediately.

The scene that appeared before him was even more terrible.

Shu'er was naked from the waist and being hugged by a finely dressed gentleman on the rug, her bosom insultingly handled. However she dared not struggle but just cried piteously.

Lian Jin and another 10 odd warriors were sitting at the side, looking at this violent scene with smiles.

By now that well dressed youth was just removing his hands from Shu'er's skirt and was about to take it off.

When the warriors saw Xiang Shaolong dashing in, they all

jumped up and drew their swords, while Lian Jin was calm and composed, the corner of his mouth curled up in disdain, looking at him icily.

Because the wooden sword was too heavy, Xiang Shaolong did not carry it with him all the time, but for a man like him who has undergone the most scientific and rigorous training, would he be afraid of these men. Before his opponents are steady on their feet, he'd already dashed into the crowd of warriors and cornered one of them, throwing a heavy punch at the person's chest and snatched his long sword from him.

He turned around with the sword, executing the Mozi swordplay that originated from the Master Mo Zhai, slashing hard at the sword of the warrior who came attacking towards his right.

"Clang!"

That person roared, and before his sword reached the ground, he was already kicked in the groin and knelt down in a painful shout.

A look of surprise flashed through Lian Jin's eyes and he stood up, standing in front of that young master. Shu'er saw that Xiang Shaolong has come to save her and without knowing where she found her strength from, pushed that young master away and ran crying towards Xiang Shaolong.

But Lian Jin extended his feet to trip her and she immediately fell to the ground. Lian Jin stepped on her naked back, and she was unable to move at all.

Xiang Shaolong was almost bursting with anger on seeing this, and with a sweep of his sword, blocked the five swords that were attacking him, and with a change of his swordplay, another two men fell immediately.

By now he's only about ten odd steps away from Lian Jin and that young master, but between them there are 12 fierce warriors. On seeing that Shu'er is about to fall into the hands of that young master again, Xiang Shaolong picked up a pile of swords and threw them beneath the feet of the warriors who were running towards him.

Those warriors have never fought in such a way before, the swords struck their waists and legs and they fell to the ground.

When Xiang Shaolong jumped up, he is already face to face with Lian Jin, staring into each other's eyes.

Lian Jin kicked Shu'er aside, his hand moved and he drew his long sword from the scabbard. The sword gleamed and made its way towards Xiang Shaolong.

Xiang Shaolong did not expect his opponent's swordplay to be so exquisite. He executed the essence of the Mozi swordplay clumsily and lashed out with his sword.

A crisp "Clang!" was heard and Lian Jian's sword was parried off. He retracted then attacked again, as fast as a meteor.

Xiang Shaolong wanted to block that attack but two warriors were coming up from behind him so he had no choice but to step back and block the two opponents first.

Lian Jin smiled icily but did not give chase.

“Stop!”

A loud shout came from the door and Tao Fang dashed in with 10 odd warriors towards Xiang Shaolong, forcing Lian Jin’s men to retreat to one side, resulting in a face-off between the two groups.

The half naked Shu’er got up and threw herself into Xiang Shaolong’s arms, crying.

Tao Fang saw the young master behind Lian Jin and his expression changed immediately, “Old servant here does not know that Grand Young Master is here, would Grand Young Master please forgive me.”

Xiang Shaolong hugged Shu’er and realization dawned. No wonder Lian Jin had the guts to create trouble here, so he has the backing of Master Wu’s grandson.

That Grand Young Master came next to Lian Jin and ignoring Tao Fang, pointed to Xiang Shaolong with a murderous look in his eye and asked, “Who do you think you are, what’s the big deal about me having some fun with your woman.”

Lian Jin smiled icily and said, “It should be his honor!”

Tao Fang smiled condescendingly and said, “It’s just a case of misunderstanding, Shaolong did not know it is Grand Young Master who has come!”

That Grand Young Master stared at Shaolong angrily.

Xiang Shaolong stared back so unwaveringly, that even a

bully like Grand Young Master felt a shiver in his heart.

Lian Jin shouted, "What audacity! How dare you be so rude to Master Tingwei, kneel down now."

Tao Fang advised from the side, "Hurry up and apologize to Grand Young Master!"

Xiang Shaolong looked heavenward and laughed for a long time before saying, "Master is the only one whom I will obey, if Grand Young Master is not happy about that, then tell someone to kill me!"

He lowered his head and said to Shu'er, "You'll go back to the room first!"

Shu'er lifted up her tear stained face, and after taking a loving look at him, ran into the house.

The atmosphere became extremely tense.

Lian Jin hurriedly went to Wu Tingwei and whispered something into his ears.

Xiang Shaolong knows that Lian Jin has received news that he will be dueling with him in front of Emperor Xiaocheng, so he has no wish to fight with him first now.

Indeed, Wu Tingwei nodded his head and stared at him angrily, saying, "I'll see how many more good days you low-down slave will have ahead of you."

And left with his men in fury.

Lian Jin deliberately brushed past his shoulder and said with a smile before leaving, "You blocked well with your sword,

but lack experience. It'll be rare if you can block 10 attacks of mine."

Xiang Shaolong calmed down and was secretly dreading being reprimanded by Tao Fang, but after Tao Fang waved his men away, he sat closely next to him and sighed, "Now my fate is intertwined with yours. If you lose to Lian Jin, I won't have the face to stay on in the Wu Family as well."

Xiang Shaolong felt extremely guilty and apologized.

Tao Fang looked at him for a moment before he suddenly smiled, "You're really someone who treasures relationships, but this has got nothing to do with you. Among the 12 servants, Master trusts Wu Hei and me the most; and we've always been on opposing ends. This time Wu Hei went around spreading rumors that because I lost a hundred odd horses, I made up a story about you single handedly fighting 800 horse thieves. Now the Master is giving me no choice but to let you fight a duel with Lian Jin. Shaolong you must help me vent my anger."

He continued with a smile, "Just now you felled almost 10 of Grand Young Master's warriors in front of Lian Jin, now that may not be a bad thing, because one news of this gets to Master's ears, he'll look at you differently. If you can win Lian Jin, then the world will belong to you and me."

Li Shan hurriedly walked over and said with shock, "Before Su Nu went to see Prince Shaoyuan; she made an excuse to change and freshen up but hanged herself instead. Prince Shaoyuan is extremely furious and said that he's going to

look for Brother Xiang to vent his anger.”

Xiang Shaolong felt as if the earth has shattered, and is so livid that his limbs turned cold, his eyes and mouth opened in shock, but his tears rolled uncontrollably down the corner of his eyes.

For the first time in his life, he felt a strong, burning desire for revenge.

Xiang Shaolong made mad love with Shu’er on the rug in the room.

Only her alluring body can offer him a form of escape in this cruel era where power is everything.

Only at this moment did he understand why Mei Canniang would rather suffer the parting and pine for him then to come to Handan.

No matter how difficult it is, he will use the most brutal method to kill Prince Shaoyuan at all costs to avenge Su Nu.

The two of them held each other and lay down, their limbs entangling, enjoying the warm atmosphere in the aftermath of their coupling.

Shu’er suddenly exclaimed, “Xiang Lang¹! Shu’er is really afraid that we won’t have such happy times very soon.”

Xiang Shaolong smiled and said, “Don’t worry! Tao Fang will explain to Master Wu that if his grandson and Lian Jin keep harassing me, I will definitely lose at the imperial duel due to

¹ Lang: similar to the term husband

agitation. Therefore before the duel, you'll be safe."

Shu'er was a little assured, and said resolutely, "If anything bad were to happen to Xiang Lang, Shu'er will definitely follow you in death."

Xiang Shaolong kissed her tiny lips and said gently, "Don't worry! I definitely will not lose."

A knock on the door was heard, and Chunying's voice filtered in, "Master Xiang, Master Tao has ordered us to help you bath and change."

Shu'er sat up and said happily, "Let Shu'er serve you wholeheartedly this morning."

CHAPTER 10
Spending The Night Together
[Translated by JEAN]

TAO FANG spoke to Xiang Shaolong quietly through the carriage window, "I know that Shaolong has long guessed that it's Lady Ya who wants to see you. Ever since her husband Zhao Kuo died in the battle of Chang Ping, that wanton has been hunting handsome men everyday to become her intimate guests. If she's satisfied after trying them out, she'll keep them as her lover, and Lian Jin is one of them."

Xiang Shaolong asked quietly, "Does her brother Emperor

Xiaocheng know about this?”

Tao Fang replied, “The whole city is full of spies, how could his Majesty not know. It’s just that in the past his Majesty was tricked by Fan Ju from the state of Qin, and replaced Lian Po* with Zhao Kuo, refusing to listen to the advise of the then Prime Minister Lin Xiangru. He sent Zhao Kuo, who can only talk but doesn’t know how to strategize a war, to fight the Qin soldiers at Changping, and caused the 400,000 brave soldiers to be almost totally annihilated. Zhao Kuo died in the battlefield, and only about 240 survivors returned. His Majesty felt guilt towards his sister, so he condones her actions. Therefore Lady Ya holds a certain amount of influence over his Majesty, so don’t you offend her.”

He signaled the footmen to start the journey.

Xiang Shaolong felt that the entire situation was hilarious.

When he reached Wu An initially, he had thought of becoming a gigolo to earn money for traveling expenses. Who would have expected that now he would have no choice but to really become a gigolo, and his customer is that Lady Ya.

He has suffered enough setbacks and anguish, and has no mood to enjoy the changing scenery outside the window because his heart is in turmoil.

His thinking in the past was quite naïve, thinking that with his military training he will be able to excel in this era. But he did not expect such complications, and like the same across

all eras, brute strength is not enough to accomplish anything.

If he wants to control his own fate, he'll have to use extreme measures, and step on everyone else so that he will not have to be led around by the nose.

The most important thing right now is to defeat Lian Jin. But in the earlier fight with him, this person's swordplay is truly at his peak. Even if he were to include wrestling in the duel, he might still not be able to win.

Besides, what Lian Jin said was correct, he has only learnt the Mozi swordplay for a few months, and is not that experienced yet, so how can he win him.

When they dueled earlier, Lian Jin was exceptionally calm and composed, just like what Yuan Zong said a true swordsman should achieve. But he on the other hand was rash and impulsive, if he can't change this, he will certainly lose, so what should he do?

Suddenly he had an idea, and thought of that extreme beauty Wu Tingfang.

If he can win her heart, what kind of a blow will it be for Lian Jin who thinks the world of himself? When it comes to wooing ladies, it has always been his forte, so there's no way that hateful babe Wu Tingfang will be able to reject him. The problem is that in ancient times there's no such thing as phoning to arrange a date, so how can he get to her himself?

By now the carriage has gone passed a huge mansion, with

guards standing at the door. He saw people wearing clothes that don't seem to be usual outfit for the Zhaos walking in and out so he asked the footman who was driving the carriage.

The footman replied, "That's the house in Handan which belongs to people from other states."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly overjoyed, and thought that maybe the Qin Emperor Ying Zheng is staying in there, and he can't help but feel uplifted.

The horse carriage turned right into another main road made from cobblestones and proceeded towards a huge mansion.

Xiang Shaolong collected his composure and told himself, "Xiang Shaolong! This is the time for you to change; you cannot be so trusting towards others anymore or let feelings rule your head."

Fine!

Then let me try something, and conquer this Lady Ya first to give Lian Jin his first heavy setback.

After changing into a set of fitting warrior's clothes with a cloak, matched with a long sword at his waist and his hair combed neatly into a crown, Xiang Shaolong followed two lovely maids and stepped into Lady Ya's grand mansion.

The pretty maid invited him to sit on the rug and gave him scented tea before leaving him sitting alone in the spacious hall.

Xiang Shaolong was bored and started observed his surroundings.

The hall was exquisitely decorated, with a silk painting on palace people on the wall, the colors vibrant.

There was a large rug in the middle of the hall woven with pictures of clouds, the color clean and simple, very pleasing to the eyes. The few cupboards against the wall were full of playthings. If he can just take any one of them back to the 21st century and put it up for auction, he'll be rich for the rest of his life.

Right at this time, he had a feeling of being watched.

Xiang Shaolong glanced nonchalantly at a large folding screen on his left which was made up of eight paintings, and seem to see from the gap in between the reflection from an eye. He was secretly laughing, and knew that this must be Lady Ya who has come to inspect the goods.

If he appears to be uneasy or do anything embarrassing while waiting impatiently, this wonton Lady Ya who loves toying with men will surly despise him. Once he thought about this, he became mischievous and stood up; sweeping his cape aside to reveal his manly body that can intoxicate any female. He stretched and walked to a large window and looked out so that Lady Ya can just see his chiseled left profile.

He stood straight like a mountain, one hand behind him, the other hand resting on his sword, a look of deep thought in his expression, very immersed in his acting.

He did not bring his wooden sword, because that's his secret weapon and he did not wish to reveal it to anyone before his duel with Lian Jin.

The garden outside the window looked especially pretty and calming under the rays of the setting sun.

A gentle breeze blew, uplifting his spirits.

For a moment he forgot that Lady Ya is peeping at him, and remembered his own era.

In that era, the rule of strong eating the weak has not changed, but there are still laws, and regulations between different countries. But in this warring states period, the ruler's order is law, the words of the state is maxim, so it seems that Emperor Qin did not do anything appalling at all. If he did not unify China, they will be eaten by other countries sooner or later. It is Emperor Qin who built the Great Wall that helped China maintain its unity for a long time.

Footsteps were heard.

The pretty maid came to invite him in to see Lady Ya, and to remove his sword.

Xiang Shaolong knows that he has passed the first round, so he removed his sword and followed the pretty maid in.

He had just stepped into the door and immediately he saw a pretty lady lying down on a long couch at the other end, looking totally relaxed with a hand supporting her chin. A pair of alluring yet dreamy looking eyes was sizing him up

coldly, her fair legs peeping out from her skirt, creating a picturesque scene of a beauty lazing that is enough to make any man fall head over heels.

The small hall was not lighted, the setting sun shone in from two large windows with floral carving from the west.

The pretty maid went out, leaving Xiang Shaolong standing in front of the door. He really has no idea what the material that Lady Ya, who was still lying in the chaise, was made of. Maybe it's made with silk mixed with something else, as it was radiating. Her earrings were made from pretty jade, a golden hairpin gleaming in her hair, pearls decorating her clothes, her skirt light and sheer, and her body emanating a heavy fragrance.

The shape of her face is extremely pretty, her brows well drawn, her smooth skin fair with a tinge of red, extremely alluring.

The most intoxicating part is her idle yet alluring pose, her mature and enchanting ways. Compared to Wu Tingfang, she is another kind of beauty who certainly did not fare any worse.

She cannot be any older than 25, right in the prime of a woman's life.

Xiang Shaolong's interest is already piqued, but in order to conquer this beauty, he deliberately pretended to be unaffected and proud, and walked boldly forward, stopping five paces in front of her, bowed and said, "Xiang Shaolong pays his respects to Lady Ya."

After he finished speaking, he stared boldly at her alluring body but did not reveal any lecherous look at all, and looked as if he's just admiring a plaything on one of the shelves at the outer hall.

Lady Ya laughed coquettishly, emitting a clear, crisp voice that sounds even nicer than bells and said gently, "Xiang Shaolong! Take a seat!"

Xiang Shaolong smiled slightly and sat down suavely. He looked deeply into her pretty eyes, but did not speak.

Madam Ya said unhappily, "I've never seen someone who look at me with such disrespect and audacity, don't you know my status?"

Xiang Shaolong smiled lazily, and replied with indescribable confidence, "How would I not know Lady's status, but it still does not change the fact that I am a man and you are a woman. I'm admiring Lady the way a man will look at a woman, and this shows that Lady's allure is enough to make me forget about your higher status."

Lady Ya was stunned, and sat up straight.

Xiang Shaolong's gaze dropped to her perk bosom, this time he is not pretending.

Lady Ya exclaimed angrily, "How rude! What are you looking at?"

Xiang Shaolong knows that it's time to stop, so he said with a serious and respectful expression, "Since Lady does not like me revealing my true feelings, then feel free to punish me."

Lady Ya was a little helpless as she replied, "Forget it! Do you know why I summoned you?"

Xiang Shaolong very much wanted to say of course he's here to sleep with her, but of course he dared not reveal this, so he said calmly, "Of course I do, Lady wants to see if Xiang Shaolong is the thing that Lady has been looking for all this time."

Lady Ya's pretty eyes lighted up, and after exchanging a long look with him, said, "Humph" and laughed, "I've never seen a man more conceited than you."

Xiang Shaolong stood up with a smile and bowed, "Since you are so displeased with me, then I shall take my leave."

And turned around to leave.

Lady Ya did not expect him to do this and exclaimed angrily, "Stop there, or don't you want your life anymore."

Xiang Shaolong turned around and said with a charming smile, "Lady, please don't be upset. Actually how can I bear to leave? I just wanted to see if Lady will ask me to stay and spend the night."

Lady Ya was in a flurry after being attacked by his brilliant eyes, overpowering charisma and strong words, making her look even more alluring.

The last ray of the sun finally disappeared from the west under the plains outside the city of Handan.

The small hall became dark, throwing this couple into a

mysterious environment.

Xiang Shaolong walked to a small table at Lady Ya's side and knelt on the rug, reached out his hand, took the kindle from the table and lighted the exquisite lamp made from jade.

Under the light, Lady Ya's eyes became two round and bright rare black precious stones.

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought to himself, this is the first time since he arrived that he tasted such a romantic ancient atmosphere. He must have the beautiful body beneath that fine silk tonight no matter what, and totally conquer both her body and her mind.

This is the dream of every man who has ever seen her, and he is no exception.

He moved towards her as he knelt, grabbed her shoulders and said gently, "Do you want me to treat you as a Lady or a woman, would Lady please tell me."

Lady Ya realized that there's no way she can play coy any further, so her body softened and she fell into his arms and said with a soft sigh, "Why must Xiang Shaolong force me thus?"

Xiang Shaolong lifted up her delicate chin, tilting her head up and kissed her gently a dozen times on her lips before giving her a hard kiss. He used all his kissing skills learnt from porn movies and comics as well as his most tried and tested effective skills to flirt with this beauty. He took the opportunity to move his hand down, sweeping past her

bosom and soft waist, his palm pressing down on her taut and fiery tummy.

Lady Ya's writhed her body, her whole body lightly trembling, her breathing getting more and more rapid, her tongue's reaction getting more and more intense. Obviously she is starting to get aroused.

Xiang Shaolong left her fragrant shoulder, looking at her heavy-lidded eyes lovingly and asked emotionally, "Is Lady happy?"

Lady Ya revealed a look of loss and said quietly, "Am I happy? No! I never dared to think of this question."

Xiang Shaolong secretly sighed, beautiful women always have hard lives, and the responsibility of course falls on the men. But beauty is as short lived as a dream, so there are not a lot of beauties who can be happy when their beauty is slowly fading.

Ancient beauties are thus short lived, never allowing others to see them growing old.

Therefore Lady Ya wants to hunt handsome men for pleasure while she's still in her prime. But modern research papers have pointed out that such mindless sex will not make one happy.

So Xiang Shaolong came straight to the point and asked her this question. Lady Ya immediately revealed her true feelings unconsciously, because he has touched a sore spot.

Xiang Shaolong wanted to remove her belt.

Lady Ya smiled coquettishly, and grabbing his hands, suddenly pulled him up and said happily like a little girl, "But I know I'll be very happy tonight. Here! Come to my room, I've prepared food and wine and we can chat and drink at the same time, all right?"

Lady Ya placed the wine cup at Xiang Shaolong's lips, a flirty smile on her pretty face and said, "This is the first cup of wine, Shaolong shall we each drink half of it?"

Xiang Shaolong was secretly laughing that no matter how noble her birth is or how high her status is, she is still a woman who needs the love and care of a man. So with this point, he will be able to make himself irresistible to her.

The only way to conquer her is to treat her like an ordinary woman, and the most important thing is to make her feel that it's better to be a woman than a Lady.

He's very confident that he can accomplish this.

The only question is how important Lian Jin is to her, because he is also a very attractive man.

Lady Ya can be considered to be another battlefield for him and Lian Jin.

He drank half a cup of wine from Lady Ya's hands, and suddenly kissed her on the mouth, slowly passing the fine wine into her tiny mouth.

Lady Ya gurgled but she has no strength to push him away, so she can only drink his half-cup of wine obediently. Her pretty face blushed, and even her enchanting dimples were

reddened.

Xiang Shaolong left her tiny mouth, gently taking over the cup from her fingers, and before she had the chance to protest, poured it into her tiny mouth that was panting quickly. He said gently, "This half cup is mine, so don't you drink it into your pretty belly."

Lady Ya rolled her eyes at him coquettishly, her fragrant lips already locked with his, the wine in her mouth sucked dry by him.

The two of them separated. Either Lady Ya is a bad drinker, or she is too heated by desire, but she moaned and collapsed into his arms.

Xiang Shaolong has no wish to conquer this noble beauty so soon, so he tilted her face up and scattered hot kisses on her hair, face, ears and neck.

Lady Ya finally removed all her barriers and guards, and was panting and moaning, unable to control herself.

Xiang Shaolong's hand slipped into her clothes, lovingly kneading the smooth and supple thighs and tummy, teasing her tender and soft skin inch by inch, not missing a single spot and said gently, "Do you have they feeling of being toyed by a man now?"

Lady Ya asked, "Are you really not leaving me with any dignity at all?"

And she continued moaning.

Xiang Shaolong's hands stopped but he did not take them out of her clothes. He tilted his head and looked at this beauty with a head of messy hair, disheveled clothes, with a pair of fair legs and half her bosom exposed to the air. The corners of his mouth curved into a slight smile and he asked, "Can I take a close look at Lady Ya's body?"

Lady Ya replied hoarsely, "You have touched it so many times now, and yet you're still asking me?"

Xiang Shaolong looked heavenward and laughed loud and long. The heroic air he exudes melted Lady Ya's heart immediately, and she lowered her head and said submissively, "Look then! You can look all you want."

Xiang Shaolong knows that he's getting closer to success, or else she would not behave with such abandon and obedience.

His hands immediately started, at times gentle, at times wild, and a little brutish as well, beginning the actual attack on her.

The night passed like that.

She is no longer a lady of noble birth, but a shameless woman in heated desire enjoying her lover's ministrations.

Every second is filled with fiery desire.

The joy between a man and a woman drove into Lady Ya wave by wave, making her delirious. She cried out the name of this lovely yet hateful man madly, touching and hugging this perfect male body, feeling his explosive strength and his

seemingly endless intense attacks, reaching the fiery peak where soul meets desire time and again. In the past when she was with other men, she'd always chase them away immediately after the act and sleep alone, even Lian Jin was no exception. But tonight she has no wish to leave this man's embrace even for a moment. But it is only for tonight.

Everything will be different tomorrow; no man will be able to make her surrender.

She only wants to capture men, but does not wish to be captured, because that would be too torturous.

She fell into a deep sleep in her daze, and when she woke up it's already late in the morning.

Xiang Shaolong is already gone, only leaving behind on the blanket a yellow chrysanthemum freshly plucked from the garden.

Lady Ya clutched tightly at the stem, a sweet and satisfied alluring smile appeared on her pretty face.

CHAPTER 11
The Affections Of A Beauty
[Translated by JEAN]

WHEN Xiang Shaolong returned to the guesthouse, Tao Fang is already waiting for him.

After Chunying and the rest of the maids carried in their breakfast, they left.

Tao Fang sniggered and asked, "Is that flirtatious horse exciting?"

Xiang Shaolong replied from the bottom of his heart, "Extremely exciting."

Tao Fang stopped smiling and said seriously, "Master brought up the issue of your duel with Lian Jin to his Majesty. His Majesty was very happy and chose the duel to be at dusk the day after tomorrow. I think it's best that you do not tangle with women for these few days, conserve your energy. You must win this duel."

Xiang Shaolong replied with some embarrassment, "Don't worry! I'm the kind of person that, with more women I have, the more energetic I am. If there are no women, I'm more lethargic instead."

When he saw that he looked doubtful, he added, "Don't forget that on the night we dealt with the horse thieves, Ting Fangshi was sleeping with me."

Of course Tao Fang does not know that he did not copulate with Ting Fangshi that night, and after looking at him with admiration, said, "Now you've become the center of attraction in Handan, and on the same par as Master, even Guo Zong, who made his fortune from ironworks, was asking about you."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed in surprise, "What? There's actually someone else who is equally wealthy as our Master?"

Tao Fang replied, "There is only one such person in the state of Zhao. If we were to measure the number of Master's livestock using valleys, then the weapons that Guo Zong made from iron can be measured using ships. Not only did he supply weapons for the whole of Zhao, but also to all the

other friendly states, earning a large sum of money.”

He lowered his voice and continued, “Because of this, his Majesty is more fond of Guo Zong than our Master, because Master’s Father is a half-Qin, that’s why he has such a strange name.”

Xiang Shaolong’s heart lurched, as if he has a hazy idea, but is unable to describe it clearly.

Tao Fang added on, “I received confidential news last night, that rascal Wu Tingwei is very displeased with you, and very much wanted to have your Yan nobility, Shu’er. That’s why he has decided to disregard Master’s orders and will kill you before your duel with Lian Jin. It seems like I will have to bring you along to pay a call to Young Master, so that that rascal will not dare to make any rash moves.”

Xiang Shaolong was still thinking about the matter regarding Master Wu having Qin blood in him. No wonder he wanted so much for a Zhao to win Lian Jin, but maybe that’s not what he truly felt, but did this to show the Zhao Emperor that he is totally on their side. That’s why he refused to speak up for the Yans, and instead gave a beauty like Shu’er to him because of this thinking of his.

In the warring states period there is nothing more important than bloodline, so from this it can be seen what a difficult task it would be to unite the people from so many different countries. When he heard what Tao Fang said, he asked, “Will Lian Jin be helping that rascal deal with me?”

Tao Fang is really open with him now, and did not try to hide

anything, saying "Even if you put a sword to Lian Jin's neck now, he would not dare to start the fight first. That scoundrel went around picking fights because he wanted to get his Majesty's attention. However his Majesty has always ignored him, and even told the people around him that he's not happy that our Master has found a foreigner to make our own swordsmen look bad. Not that he's got this chance; he would not want to spoil it."

Xiang Shaolong thought that this King Zhao is so narrow minded, how can he accomplish anything great. He said with a laugh, "Without Lian Jin, I'm not afraid of that rascal, he can't possibly find a few hundred people to attack me, right?"

Tao Fang was extremely impressed with his humor and chortled, "Of course not, and besides, he has to do this secretly. But it's still better to pay a call to Eldest Young Master. Among Master's 17 sons, Eldest Young Master is the most capable and is in charge of all business with other states. And he has a beautiful daughter Wu Tingfang who may have the opportunity of becoming the empress, but his Majesty is still hesitating about accepting Young Grand Missy because of Master having Qin blood in him. The nobility in the royal family are all objecting to this."

Xiang Shaolong is getting all confused from all these. Things that look very simple on the surface, is actually extremely complicated, so he nodded his head and replied, "All right! I'll pay a call to Eldest Young Master once I have the chance."

Tao Fang replied, "What chance or no chance, I'll take you to see Eldest Young Master immediately. We need to gain the upper hand and not let Wu Tingwei strike first."

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows and said, "At least let me change my clothes first!"

Tao Fang laughed, "Hurry up! I'll wait here for you."

Xiang Shaolong slipped back into his room hurriedly.

Shu'er and the four maids were rushing to make his warrior clothes so that he can wear it to see the King of Zhao. Xiang Shaolong's mood turned for the better, and his hands started roaming over the five ladies and enjoying their careful ministrations at the same time, making his one mistress and four maids all blush to their ears before he left with Tao Fang on horses to the Wu residence.

They came to the bustling martial arts practice field, went around the large mansion where they say Master Wu the other day, walked past a garden to another grand courtyard.

The two of them were invited to wait in the large hall.

After a while, a warrior walked out and invited Tao Fang in, leaving Xiang Shaolong alone, who wondered why that Eldest Young Master did not see them both?

At this point in time that warrior walked out again and told Xiang Shaolong, "Would Master Xiang please follows me!"

Xiang Shaolong followed him and went into another side hall first before abruptly turning left into a garden.

Xiang Shaolong was suspicious, and that warrior's steps quickened suddenly. Right at this time, there was a flash of sword, and two long swords shot out from the bushes on either side, aiming straight at his left and right side.

Luckily he has an intuition long ago, and without advancing or retreating, just stood on the spot and drew out his sword. "Clang clang", not only did he force his enemy to retreat, but he also injured one of them.

30 odd warriors came out from the bushes and behind the trees. And one of them is Wu Tingwei, and he was heavily surrounded.

Xiang Shaolong stood there holding his sword, obviously not afraid at all.

Wu Tingwei hid behind the warriors and called out arrogantly, "Dog slave, let's see where you can escape this time."

Xiang Shaolong smiled suavely and replied, "This time? I don't think I was the one who escaped the last time, right?"

Wu Tingwei had thought that he would beg for mercy, and did not expect him to be so merciless with his words. He was furious and roared, "Kill him for me."

Xiang Shaolong is such an experienced fighter, and he understands the logic of striking the enemy first, especially since he is outnumbered now. Wu Tingwei has just opened his mouth but he has already turned into the crowd of warriors with his sword, slashing and kicking, like a tiger in a

herd of sheep, seriously injuring a handful of them, thus interfering with their movements.

The warriors have never fought in such a way that is totally without rules but seeks only efficiency, besides they are afraid of this action that will clearly defy their Master's orders, and on seeing his bravery, most of them just stood there for show.

Xiang Shaolong was furious with Wu Tingwei for molesting Shu'er yesterday, so he was totally ruthless in his attacks, executing the Mozi swordplay to perfection. His movements were mysterious, ever-changing, broad movements yet his techniques were exquisite, suddenly attacking and retreating, with a flying kick once in a while. In short time, his opponents were all staggering in chaos.

Under the orders of Wu Tingwei, the warriors had no choice but to charge, and they fell one by one, either stuck by the sword or a kick. None of the attacks are fatal, but just enough to make them lose the ability to fight back.

In the blink of an eye, only the 10 warriors standing in front of Wu Tingwei protecting him were left.

Xiang Shaolong gave a cold snort, his pair of cold and aggressive eyes staring icily at Wu Tingwei, his sword pointing forward, walking strongly and steadily step by step towards Wu Tingwei and those 10 warriors.

Wu Tingwei did not expect him to be so brave and sharp, felling 10 odd men and yet he's not even panting. He felt a shiver, and while ordering his men to attack, he retreated

towards the back instead.

Xiang Shaolong will certainly not let him off, so he dashed forward, his sword slashing. One of the warriors raised his sword to block him, there was a 'clang', and that warrior actually fell and rolled to the ground with the impact. Obviously the strength of his arm is extremely frightening.

All the warriors were startled, afraid that he will injure Wu Tingwei, and they all converged with their swords ready to attack.

But this time Xiang Shaolong did not press on his attack, instead he executed a series of movements to defend himself.

Two of the warriors thought that he is now exhausted and were about to take the opportunity to attack but they suddenly realized that their opponent's defense was so tight that they have no way of attacking. Even more alarming is that his defense secretly allows him to attack at will as well, holding them at bay, giving them a feeling that they can no longer retreat.

That is the essence of the Mozi swordplay, hiding an attack while defending. When Xiang Shaolong was fighting with the last Juzi of Mohism, Yuan Zong, he was unable to execute any offensive moves at all. The two men now are far worse than he was in the past, so naturally their attacks are negligible.

The two of them panicked and were about to retreat when there was a flash of sword and the two warriors fell back

bleeding.

Xiang Shaolong took this opportunity when everyone else was in frenzy to dash past his enemy's protective barrier and go straight towards Wu Tingwei.

Wu Tingwei hardened himself to stand still and defend with his sword.

But who would have expected Xiang Shaolong to rapidly retreat again, right into the midst of the advancing warriors.

After felling four warriors, he leapt towards the retreating Wu Tingwei.

"Clang!"

A series of seven sword attacks, Wu Tingwei was forced into the woods by him and the remaining warriors collapsed on the ground.

"Dang!"

Wu Tingwei's sword flew out of his hands, his back knocked onto a large tree. His face paled and he yelled, "What a bold slave, how dare you be rude?"

Xiang Shaolong's eyes shot out an icy cold stare and said frostily, "If you have the guts, call me slave again."

The tip of his sword pointed at this conceited young man's throat.

Xiang Shaolong is not at all concerned that others may come here, because this is something dishonorable, so Wu Tingwei must have made arrangements to send the nearby servants

away.

Wu Tingwei was frightened by his forcefulness that even his body started shaking and asked hoarsely, "Do you dare to hurt me?"

But he still do not have the guts to take the risk of calling him slave.

Xiang Shaolong's face was expressionless and asked quietly, "Where is Master Tao?"

Wu Tingwei was almost crying when he said, "I only sent some people to hold him back!"

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought to himself that he wouldn't dare to go overboard anyway, so he smiled and asked, "Grand Young Master, you don't believe that I'll hurt you? All the more I want to blind you in one eye, let's see if you'll believe me."

Wu Tingwei saw that his smile was cold and heartless, and is even more chilling than if he was fierce and furious. He finally broke down and exclaimed, "No!"

Xiang Shaolong's long sword continued towards its goal.

At the same time Wu Tingwei was screaming, a dainty gasp was heard from behind Xiang Shaolong.

Wu Tingwei thought that his eye will be lost, his whole body weakened and at the same moment that he peed in fright, the long sword slanted a little, brushed past his face and pierced into the tree trunk, the difference of only a few

millimeters.

“Bang!”

Xiang Shaolong’s right leg kicked his thigh.

Wu Tingwei flew to one side; Xiang Shaolong turned around with his sword and blocked the sword of the beauty Wu Tingfang.

Xiang Shaolong looked at her coldly and asked quietly, “So is Grand Young Missy involved as well?”

Wu Tingfang was so furious that her face reddened, and she gritted her teeth and uttered, “I’m going to kill you.”

Her sword came attacking like the Changjiang River, her swordplay far better than her elder brother’s, just that she lacks the strength and experience.

Xiang Shaolong had an idea, and he retreated as he fought, and in short time he lured her deep into the isolated woods.

Wu Tingfang saw that she could not defeat him even with her ferocious attacks and the more upset and impatient she was, the more distracted she became. She was panting, and after slashing two more times, her sword flew out of her hands with a ‘dang’.

Xiang Shaolong returned his sword to his scabbard; took a step forward and hugged her. He carried her up and pressed her to a tree, looking at her sweet and dainty face with his head tilted to one side.

Wu Tingfang was totally exhausted, so she only made a show

of trying to struggle before collapsing in his arms, asking in fear and anger, "What do you want?"

Xiang Shaolong replied gently, "Compensation of course."

Wu Tingfang was startled and tried to struggle again with her remaining strength, but Xiao Shaolong took the opportunity to use his chest and legs to rub against her sensitive, prohibited spots, and her struggle soon became a strong reaction to his movements.

Since she was born, this is the first time she has been teased so rudely by a man this way.

Lian Jin has hugged her before as well, but she pushed him away immediately. This is the first time something like this has happened.

She was angry, but her body started feeling waves of strange pleasure.

She did not take part in Wu Tingwei's plan at all, but she saw the whole process when she went after him after finding out that there's something amiss. She saw Xiang Shaolong's heroism, frighteningly accurate strategies and swordsmanship that is comparable to Lian Jin's. And there's something that even Lian Jin cannot compare, this person seems to have endless stamina. When he is cold he makes one shiver, when he is gentle and smiling he looks suave, and even now when she is being molested by him, she finds it difficult to really hate him.

When the pleasure in her body became stronger, she

moaned, and her lips were locked with his.

Wu Tingfang was shocked and embarrassed, his tongue attacked through her locked teeth. She moaned and was lost in her first kiss with a man, the thought of Lian Jin disappearing far from her mind immediately.

Sounds of people walking could be heard from outside the woods.

Xiang Shaolong left her lips, nibbled on her earlobes and said, "To be able to kiss Grand Young Missy's sweet lips, even death would be worth it."

He let her go and walked out with large strides.

Wu Tingfang's body weakened and she slid down the truck, collapsing on the ground, all her hatred disappearing without a trace. Her body still felt that shameless excitement and pleasure.

When Xiang Shaolong walked back to the path outside the woods where he was attacked, a large burly man with a gold belt and huge eyes were reprimanding the kneeling warriors and Wu Tingwei.

Tao Fang stood at the side with his head lowered, and when he saw him coming, signaled him with his eyes.

Xiang Shaolong made way for a seriously injured warrior who was being carried away before he walked towards the burly man, knelt down and paid his respects.

He was careful when he struck with his sword, only making

the other party lose the ability to fight, but his first few blows were a bit harder since he was trying to scare them.

That burley man turned his head around and asked coldly, "Where is Tingfang?"

Before Xiang Shaolong could reply, Wu Tingfang's voice could be heard from behind, "Tingfang is here. His swordsmanship is really good. I was unable to hurt him."

The burly man's expression cleared a little, and he turned to Wu Tingwei and his men first and bellowed, "All of you scram!"

Wu Tingwei dare not even take a look at Xiang Shaolong, and scuttled off with his warriors like a defeated cock.

The man turned towards Xiang Shaolong and said, "Get up!"

Xiang Shaolong stood up respectfully, and realized that Wu Tingfang was standing next to him, and glancing at him.

Tao Fang was totally perplexed and kept looking at the two of them.

That man looked at his daughter for a moment before turning towards Xiang Shaolong and said, "Excellent! Injuring 30 odd men and yet none of the attacks are fatal. This is the first time I've seen such swordsmanship. I, Wu Yingyuan will bet on you winning the duel with Lian Jin."

Xiang Shaolong was quietly laughing that no one in this era will understand human anatomy better than him as he uttered self-effacing words.

Wu Yingyuan sized him up again and said with a smile, "There are very few Zhaos who are as tall and large as you, but for Qins it's not a very rare trait."

Xiang Shaolong had a strange intuition, and felt that this Wu Yingyuan seems to take pride that he has Qin blood in him. Maybe he has this thinking because he has traveled much, thus more open-minded and knows how great the Qins are.

Wu Yingyuan seemed quite impressed with him and said, "I'm going to inspect the large farm 20 miles north of here, Shaolong come with me then!"

Wu Tingfang called out, "Father! I want to go too."

Everyone was surprised and looked at her.

Wu Tingfang lowered her pretty face, her fingers twiddling with the corner of her clothes, looking exceptionally adorable.

CHAPTER 12
Love At The Maple Tree Valley
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG and 150 warriors accompanied the Wu father and daughter and left via the north gate, galloping into the large plains.

Wu Tingfang was in high spirits and rode way ahead. Wu Yingyuan was concerned that something would happen to his daughter and was about to order his warriors to give chase when Xiang Shaolong saw this as an opportunity. It seems that Wu Tingfang is deliberately creating a chance for him, and immediately volunteered himself and went after

her.

The two horses ran wildly for more than 10 miles one behind the other, and came to a valley before Wu Tingfang slowed down. By now the two horses were puffing from the run.

Xiang Shaolong went next to her and turned his head around. Wu Yingyuan and the rest were long gone.

Wu Tingfang laughed daintily, "No need to look! This is a shortcut that only I know. They won't be coming here."

Xiang Shaolong need no further instructions, and just turned around, picked her up and hugged her. Ignoring her weak protests, he started kissing her neck, and finished up with a hard and hot kiss on her soft little mouth.

Wu Tingfang's reaction was passionate, obviously it's the first time she experienced this and can't get enough of it.

By the time they got tired from kissing, they have already left the valley.

Wu Tingfang laid her head on her shoulder, looked at him and said shyly, "You're really bold, no other man has dared to be as rude to me as you."

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be serious as he replied, "No, no! I'm just a coward!"

Wu Tingfang knows that he still remembers the other day she called him a coward. She laughed and said "Tingfang knew right away that you're not a person who easily obey anyone, grandfather is the same.

Xiang Shaolong shockingly said, "Even what you think is right or wrong, don't speak with anyone else, if it gets to master's ear my life will be in danger."

Wu Tingfang laughs and sits straight up, steering the horse to stop and says, "Look there! Crossing the valley ahead and over a small hill you'll be able to see the gate to the pasture. In the valley there's a small beautiful river, running through the pasture, why don't we go there and have fun while father isn't here yet?"

Xiang Shaolong already calculated that in this era if he can capture a girl's heart she will be braver than any girl in the 21st century. He's happy inside because he defeated Lian Jin, laughs and says "Anyone who doesn't want to have fun with you is stupid and crazy!"

He steered the horse into the valley after he said.

It's beginning of fall season, the whole valley is filled with leaves, beautiful like heaven on earth, a small river's current running from a rock and created a small pond.

Wu Tingfang is still childish, she happily jumps down from the horse and runs to the river bank.

Xiang Shaolong runs after he hugged her belly, his hands takes her belt off.

Wu Tingfang shocked, catches his hands and asks "What are you doing?"

Xiang Shaolong laughs and says "The water is clear like this, don't you want to swim?"

Wu Tingfang lowers her head and says “I can’t! If my hair gets wet father will definitely find out about us and would not forgive us.”

Xiang Shaolong says “We can just swim in shallow water only. I guarantee your hair won’t get wet.”

Wu Tingfang flushed, releases her hand and whispers “Ok! Don’t let my hair get wet, you think I don’t know what you want to do?”

Xiang Shaolong is happy, thinking to himself a beauty like this, even if he dies he won’t let go, his hands begin their actions and taking her clothes off.

Xiang Shaolong laughed, “I remember now there’s no dry cloth to wipe my body, and it’s inappropriate. Why not I seek compensation from you now, listen to how refreshing the waterfall sounds.”

Wu Tingfang was about to listen closely when Xiang Shaolong kissed her hard, his hands willfully and rudely roaming her naked body.

How can she remember to listen to the sound of the waterfall? The intoxicating feeling earlier has not fully receded and it began crashing towards her again. Amidst her urgent moaning, her limbs unconsciously wrapped tightly around this man who has captured her heart.

Xiang Shaolong may be a flirtatious man, but he’s not lecherous. It’s just that he knows that a girl like Wu Tingfang who has just experienced romance is especially fickle and

pliable. If he did not strike while the iron is hot and claim her for himself first, maybe when she sees the handsome Lian Jin, she will turn onto his embrace again.

But if he takes her for the first time, he will become the first man in her life, and even Lian Jin will find it difficult to rock their intimate relationship when that happens.

And with Lian Jin's intelligence, it's not difficult to realize that this beauty has already given him her most precious chastity, and this is the blow that he wants to give Lian Jin. No matter how nonchalant Lian Jin is, this matter involves a man's pride and attraction, so that fellow will surely be unable to take it.

And his have to achieve his goal of attacking Lian Jin.

If the Wu family were to find out about this matter, it's no big deal as well. As long as he can defeat Lian Jin, the King of Zhao will certainly look at him differently and the Wu family would not dare to do anything to him. Maybe even Lady Ya will protect him as well.

Once he thought about this, he knows that he is beginning to become more ruthless in order to reach his goals. But in this era where the strong is the leader, he has no other choice.

So with this mentality in mind, he used the gentlest and pleasing method to make this beautiful young lady lose her chastity to him. He followed up the act with tenderness and honeyed words to let her enjoy the sweetest pleasure a woman can get from a man.

When the two of them reached the big pasture that was miles wide, Wu Yingyuan's men just started to show up from afar.

The person in charge of the pasture welcomed them warmly, especially when he saw the proud Grand Young Missy leaning against him daintily, he fawned even more towards Xiang Shaolong.

The big pasture is a huge piece of land surrounded by mountains and water on three sides; and the only flat piece of ground is in the east where a large river flowed horizontally across. The hanging bridge is the only way in and out, and with high walls on each side, making it look a country of its own.

There were 10 over camps of Zhao soldiers outside the pasture; obviously the uncountable number of horses, cows and goats in the pasture is the lifeline of Handan.

The two of them were looking around when Wu Yingyuan came over with his men. He lightly chided Wu Tingfang for a moment before turning to Xiang Shaolong and said, "Come! Let me bring Shaolong around!"

Xiang Shaolong was flattered and after changing his horse, he galloped into the pasture. Wu Tingfang was of course following him.

Wu Yingyuan recounted the joys and pains of running a pasture, showing that he is extremely experienced and insightful.

The three of them came to a little hill full of sheep in the end. Wu Tingfang's inner child came out and she jumped off the horse to play with the sheep.

The two stood side by side on their horses, viewing the beautiful scenery of the majestic mountains.

Wu Yingyuan seems to remark offhandedly, "Fang'er seems to like Shaolong!"

Xiang Shaolong is unsure of his hidden meaning, and was awkwardly silent.

Wu Yingyuan smiled slightly and said, "That's good too! I've never liked Lian Jin. This person is unfathomable and is in cahoots with Wu Hei. It's just that Father trusts them, so there's nothing I can do to them."

Xiang Shaolong had a thought, Tao Fang must be Wu Yingyuan's man, that's why he trusted him as well and revealed his true feelings. He probed, "I heard Master Tao said that Master has the intention of marrying Grand Young Missy into the imperial family..."

Wu Yingyuan gave a cold snort and said, "My numerous arguments with Father are precisely because of this. Father is getting on in age, and cannot see clearly the situation now."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed in surprise, "Young Master!"

Wu Yingyuan looked at him, his eyes glaring and asked coldly, "Shaolong! Tell me honestly, where did you come from, what blood flows in your body."

Xiang Shaolong knows that if he has to make up a story, he cannot hesitate and immediately replied, "Since Young Master thinks so highly of Shaolong, I dare not hide anything from you. Actually I am the offspring of a Qin man, who has wandered into the mountain regions, and a local woman. I did not even tell Master Tao about this."

Because Wu Yingyuan already had such thinking in his mind, he was not suspicious at all. He thought for a moment and asked, "If I were to give Fang'er to you, would you promise to love her well for the rest of your life?"

Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic, but immediately asked dejectedly, "But why would Master agree to it?"

Wu Yingyuan replied impatiently, "Forget about it first."

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly made his promise.

The corners of Wu Yingyuan's mouth curved up into a slight smile and he said joyfully, "I admire you not wholly because of your outstanding swordsmanship, or your outstanding reflexes and intelligence when dealing with the horse thieves. The most important matter is that you risked your own life and stayed behind to fight the thieves so that your comrades can leave safely. Such loyalty to your master and friends is what reassures me into giving Fang'er to you. This is a secret agreement for now, and besides Tao Fang, you must not let a 4th person know about this, and that includes Fang'er."

Xiang Shaolong felt that he seems to have some plans in his mind, and needs his wits and swordsmanship, so he lowered

his voice and asked, "If there's anything Young Master needs Shaolong to do, just let me know."

A look of surprise flashed past Wu Yingyuan's eyes, and he complimented him, "Tao Fang was right about you, with your keen observation, you will certainly be someone famous in future."

He paused for a moment before continuing, "Father is really getting old, and does not know that the situation is rapidly changing."

He added, "Ever since the three states declared independence, the first to attack among the three states Zhao, Wei and Han is Marquis Wei. The Qin in the west, Qi in the east, Han and Chu in the south, Zhao in the north, none of them were spared from his attacks. Even Handan, this sturdy large city was captured by him for two years. If not for the state of Qi's help, the Weis would not have retreated."

Those three months when Xiang Shaolong was with Yuan Zong they often talked about the affairs of the world, and is not as ignorant as when he first arrived. He added, "But later on the Wei soldiers lost in the battle of Maling under Wu Qi and Sun Bin. Later Qin, Qi and Zhao continuously attacked Wei, making them lose able generals and soldiers and a huge piece of land so now they're not as powerful as before."

Wu Yingyuan was very impressed with his knowledge and nodded his head, "There's not many in Handan who has your insight. Shaolong, tell me, who do you think is the

strongest.”

Xiang Shaolong replied without a thought, “Of course it’s Qin; the world will ultimately be conquered by Qin.”

He secretly laughed to himself, not only is there no one in Handan who has his insight, but no one in the entire warring states will be as confident of this as he is.

Wu Yingyuan was startled, “Although I thinking highly of Qin, but I’m not as sure as you are. Why would you have this thinking?”

Xiang Shaolong was almost speechless, luckily an idea flashed past and he replied, “The key point is whether the various states in the east can join forces to repel Qin, and looking at the war between Yan and Zhao now, we know the outcome of that.”

Wu Yingyuan replied, “What you meant is ‘Lian Heng’ and ‘He Zong’.”

The former means the weak joining forces to attack one strong force.

The latter means one strong force attacking all weak forces.

These are the two extreme policies during the warring states period.

Qin is in the west, the other six strong states: Qi, Wei, Zhao, Han, Chu and Yan are at the south. Any state that joins forces with Qin will be unification between the south and west, and thus named ‘Lian Heng’. If the six states were to

join forces, it'll be unification of the north and south, and they're referred to as 'He Zong'.

The situation now is getting more and more obvious, the six states are gradually losing the ability to fight against Qin on their own. Although there were small victories, it's not enough to change the whole situation. But if they were to join forces, their strength will far surpass Qin. Therefore what Qin fears most is the unification of the six states. As the saying goes, 'the only fear is the unification of the world against oneself'.

Xiang Shaolong nodded his head like an expert and said, "At the moment which state in the southeast is willing to maintain status quo. All the rulers want to take this opportunity to expand their land and fight for gains so that they can become ruler of the world, so it's impossible for them to unite."

Wu Yingyuan looked at him in shock and said, "Luckily you are not my enemy, but my future son-in-law."

Of course Xiang Shaolong understood his underlying meaning, which is to say that if that is not the case, he'll certainly get rid of him. He was about to speak when Wu Tingfang returned and said with a dainty smile, "Father has never enjoyed a conversation as much as this, Shaolong is really capable."

Wu Yingyuan looked heavenward and laughed for a long time before saying, "Father has to take a look at the account books, Fang'er will accompany Shaolong around!"

And he left on his horse.

Xiang Shaolong jumped down from his horse.

Wu Tingfang smiled coquettishly at him and rolled her eyes, "It seems that Father likes you a lot? When will Shaolong ask him for my hand, then Fang'er will be able to be with you everyday, so don't you find me irritating then."

After Xiang Shaolong swore to heaven that he will not change his heart, he walked slowly while holding the two majestic horses saying, "After I win Lian Jin and have fame and status, I'll marry you immediately. My only fear is if I will pass your Grandfather's barrier."

Wu Tingfang's eyes reddened and said, "If Grandfather does not agree, Fang'er will die in front of him."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed in surprise, "You mustn't do that, I could always elope with you and they won't be able to find us."

Wu Tingfang tugged at his sleeve happily and said with joy, "A man must keep to his words, you must not regret in future because you can't bear to give up fame and riches or because you've found a new love. I've even given myself to you. You must treasure me for the rest of your life!"

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly said some assuring words. This beauty's happiness is totally in his control now, so how can he not make her happy. He did not expect that he would be able to have wives and concubines, but in order to support them, especially a rich young lady like Wu Tingfang who is

used to luxury and being served, is not going to be easy. When he thought about how penniless he was while in Wu An, he still feels a little fear.

Wu Tingfang suddenly said, "You have to be careful of Lian Jin, he's really formidable. And I think that even though he dare not kill you, but he will at least try to maim you before he gives up."

Xiang Shaolong laughed and said, "Don't worry! If I cannot defeat even him, then I'm not competent enough to marry a pretty girl like you."

CHAPTER 13
Comparison Of Love
[Translated by JEAN]

WHEN Xiang Shaolong returned to Handan, it's already dusk. After saying sweet farewells to Wu Tingfang, he hurriedly rode back to the guest house.

The biggest benefit he got from this trip is the beauty Wu Tingfang and establishing friendship and understanding with her father. Also, under Wu Yingyuan's instructions, he is more familiar with the behavior of horses and the techniques of riding.

For someone like him who was in the elite force undergoing

strict training, what he has learnt in a day is equivalent to what an average person will learn in a year.

When he reached the guesthouse, he was shocked to see Zhao soldiers standing guard at the entrance. Luckily he bumped into Li Shan and found out that after the King of Zhao heard about the matters regarding Prince Shaoyuan and Wu Tingwei, he warned everyone not to touch Xiang Shaolong and even transferred his guards to protect him.

On one hand he was surprised at how well informed the King of Zhao was, but he has this feeling that this duel is not as simple as it seems.

He was still deep in thought when Li Shan told him, “Lady Ya ordered you to go to her residence immediately after you come back, the horse carriage is waiting for you!”

Xiang Shaolong was secretly lamenting. He’s not superman, these few days he has been making love day and night with the three beauties Shu’er, Lady Ya and Wu Tingfang, and each time he did his best. He had just been involved with Wu Tingfang, so how should he satisfy Lady Ya now.

He is so tortured that he almost groaned. He hurriedly went back and changed his clothes, consoled Shu’er who could not bear to let him leave, went up the horse carriage and fell asleep, ignoring everything else. When he woke up he realized, it’s deep into the night and he’s already in the Lady’s residence. Lady Ya slept curled up next to him, like a tame little cat.

Xiang Shaolong felt a warmth surrounding his heart and

after calling her twice, realized that she's still having sweet dreams. He gently kissed her face, eyes, nose, and mouth before carefully covering her with the blanket and stood up to walk to the window.

He stretched lazily and felt refreshed and recharged, thinking to himself that if he has to handle a few women now, his stamina would be able to take it.

No matter what, after he wins Lian Jin, he must go and look for Ying Zheng, it'll be good even if he can take a look at him. If he did not see this great man who created China single handedly, he'll not die in peace.

But there's one thing that he can't figure out. Handan is such a heavily guarded city, how is an important person like him who has the criteria to ascend the Qin throne going to slip out? If he doesn't return to Xianyang, how can he ascend the throne then?

The Handan city in movies is just an unguarded city, but it's totally different in real life. How will Ying Zheng return to become Emperor Qin?

In the past Ying Zheng's father Yi Ren had the help of the wealthy Lu Buwei before he could escape successfully. Since the Zhaos had this as an example, they would not let the same thing happen again. Even if Lu Buwei is not coming, and the Zhaos have forgotten about what he has done, it'll still be difficult to use the same ploy again.

Besides it's not something that can be accomplished in a few days. From the time Lu Buwei met Yi Ren, until the time Yi Ren

returned to Qin, it took more than 10 years. If not for the battle of Changping where 4,000,000 Zhaos were killed by the Qins, Yi Ren and Lu Buwei would not have taken the risk to return to Qin for fear of revenge. And they had no choice but to leave behind Zhao Ji and her son Ying Zheng.

How old is Ying Zheng this year, does he look as tall and large as the Qins? He really wants to know, if only there is someone he can ask.

“Shaolong!”

Shaolong was just thinking that he’ll be executed if someone finds out about this, so he was really startled when he heard his name.

He turned around.

The extremely beautiful and flimsily dressed Lady Ya was looking at him with a coquettishly smile.

Xiang Shaolong replied, “I thought you were asleep, you really startled me.”

Lady Ya moved over and hugged him tightly from behind, her slender arms twining around his neck and said, “If I don’t pretend to be asleep, how I can test if you’re really gentle. I thought you were lying to me, but when I saw that you were really startled by me, I realized you really did not know that I was feigning sleep.”

Xiang Shaolong was secretly feeling guilty. He was deep in thought about betraying the state of Zhao, but he accidentally hit the right note instead, which is really lucky.

Smelling her intoxicating fragrance, feeling the touch of her skin, Xiang Shaolong's hands can't help but start caressing and kneading her back, and of course he will not let her perky bottom off as well.

Lady Ya closed her eyes and enjoyed his loving touches, and mumbled dreamily, "You don't know how heavy you are, four soldiers had so much trouble carrying you in, I'm afraid you'll crush me to death one of these days."

Xiang Shaolong had a lusty thought and replied with a laugh, "But last night Lady was complaining that my movements were not strong enough."

Lady Ya rolled her eyes at him and left his embrace. She held up his hand and said, "Actually once I saw you, I wanted to make love with you immediately, but I don't know why now I feel like having a heart to heart talk with you instead. Come! You should be hungry by now. Shall we go to the little pavilion in the back garden and enjoy the moon and a feast?"

This is the first time Xiang Shaolong heard her talking to him in such an agreeable manner, and saw that she is not only looking for carnal satisfaction from him and knows that this wanton has started to develop feelings for him. He has a sense of accomplishment from conquering this difficult woman. Just as he was about to speak, his stomach started rumbling.

Lady Ya was amused and after laughing coquettishly, cast a flirtatious look at him and led him out of the room.

The clear moon hung high up in the sky, illuminating the whole garden and the little 2-story pavilion.

Lady Ya sighed quietly and said, "When I woke up this morning, I actually made up my mind not to look for you again, or maybe not to look for you so soon. But in less than an instant I ordered my men to bring you here, but later I thought it was inappropriate. So I changed to getting my servants to fetch you in a horse carriage. Who would have expected you to have gone out of the city with Wu Yingyuan and his daughter so early in the morning, making me wait a whole day restlessly for you. I didn't want to see anyone else, even when my brother asked for me, I feigned illness not to go."

Listening to this ultimate beauty revealing her true feelings, Xiang Shaolong only felt sweetness in his heart.

Ever since the time machine brought him back to this warring states period 2000 years ago, things have been crashing in him wave by wave, not giving him the chance to think properly all that has happened. He can only struggle to survive.

Now he is suddenly clear minded. Heavens! He's really in the ancient world, coming into contact with those people of a different era, talking, even fighting and making love.

His only regret is he was unable to ask that crazy Ma a few more questions, regarding what this is all about.

Hasn't all these already happened? Why is it now he still has a past, present and future? Just like his old reality.

If he were to change what has already happened, what repercussions will it have on the future?

Or are there countless past, and what he is facing now is only one of them.

Everything is as surreal as a dream.

The most realistic time, will only appear when he is embroiled with beauties.

Just like Lady Ya before his eyes.

“What are you thinking?”

Xiang Shaolong was jolted from these thoughts, and smiled bitterly. He may never be able to reveal his inner thoughts.

He removed his cape, walked towards her and draped it over her. He moved to face her, hugging her tightly and at the same time grabbed her slender hands, asking gently, “Why are you so honest with me? Aren’t you afraid I’ll see through your weakness and control you?”

Lady Ya smiled, “Of course I’m not! Control me all you want! I’ve been troubled the whole day, and thought about it the whole day, and realized that I really have never been happy. Hai! I’ve been numb about the matters between men and women long ago. If you grew up in the palace or a duke’s household, you will understand my meaning.”

Xiang Shaolong asked in surprise, “You were born into the royal family, you should not want of anything, and able to get everything you want. Why is it that when you talk about

the palace, it seems like you're talking about the scariest place on earth?"

Lady Ya snuggled deeper into his arms, as if she is trying to get security and warmth from him and said sadly, "It seems that during the Zhou dynasty in the past, the royal family and dukes' family were restricted by traditions and ceremonial etiquettes, and it's a rule to choose a wife from the other royal and dukes' families. Everything has to be done according to the law. No one dares to override it. But today, the palace has become the most ugly and promiscuous place. I saw with my own eyes the countless evil licentious acts my father, brothers and elders engaged in. For example they kept a few boys and wanted them to wear make-up, it's truly disgusting. My imperial uncle likes to draw on the walls of the hall, embarrassing pictures of men and women coupling, and even invited lots of his officials to drink and make merry with the palace maids, and I... hai! I really do not want to say further."

Xiang Shaolong vaguely guessed that something incestuous may have been involved, and he did not want to think about it either. He nodded his head and said, "It's better left unsaid, forget about it then."

Lady Ya's eyes reddened, and said piteously, "Shaolong! Only you can help me forget the frightening past."

Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic, and took the opportunity to say, "But first you can no longer be with other men."

Lady Ya was stunned, "You know about it!"

Xiang Shaolong sighed secretly to himself, the whole city knows about it, how can I not know? He nodded his head.

Lady Ya looked at his face for a long while, turned around and lightly pushed him away.

Xiang Shaolong was perplexed and lowered his head to scrutinize her expression.

Lady Ya's alert and jet black eyes stared at him, her countenance turning icy and said flatly, "Are you looking down on me in your heart?"

Xiang Shaolong felt a headache coming on, this woman is really unpredictable, but he knows at this time he cannot back down. He replied coldly, "If you continue to live the life of having countless 'face heads', I will really look down on you."

Lady Ya is totally helpless when she sees his chauvinistic attitude, and she softened and called out, "Shaolong! Hug me."

Xiang Shaolong shook his head and said, "If you do not promise me, I cannot obey you."

Lady Ya was in frenzy as she replied, "But you cannot accompany me the whole day, and sometimes you will go out to war. Don't you know that loneliness can kill?"

And she sighed sadly, "I have everything, and don't care for anything. Only obtaining different men, can give me the feeling of novelty and excitement for the time. All right! If you promise to stay by my side the whole day, I will chase all

the other men away.”

Xiang Shaolong smiled, “If there’s no suffering from pining, how can there be joy from reunion. Going too far will not accomplish anything. You will only value something if you get it after much suffering. If Lady does not learn this rule for happiness, you can forget about being happy in your life, it’s no use even if I try to help you.”

Lady Ya thought for a moment, a look of admiration flashed past her pretty eyes and said quietly, “Your thinking is very unique, very refreshing, making me thinks about things I’ve never thought of before. I’m exactly going too far and not accomplishing anything, that’s why I don’t have the feeling of happiness.”

She continued with a coquettish laugh, “This is the first time I feel that it’s interesting to have a conversation with a man.” Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, of course it’s interesting. Such an oft-talked about topic in the 21st century, of course it’ll be a breakthrough in thinking for people like you. Suddenly, he knows for sure that he will be able to snatch Lady Ya from Lian Jin’s hands as well, because Lian Jin lacks the knowledge of 2000 years.

My god! That is such a long distance away!

Lady Ya rolled her eyes at him and asked, “Your smile is very hateful, are you laughing at me.”

And she changed back to a naïve and lovable young girl.

Is she a little girl who has never grown up or matured

because she has always been pampered?

Xiang Shaolong had an idea, and pointed at the moon and told her the story of the cowherd and weaving girl. He ended with a sigh, "The meeting of the golden wind and jade dew; surpasses everything else on earth."²

Lady Ya was engrossed in the story, and looked up at the empty space beside the clear moon, imagining the magpie bridge there and sighed, "Shaolong thought of these two sentences, the intonation is good, and the image brought up intoxicating."

Xiang Shaolong forced himself to say, "Of course I thought of it, have you heard anyone else saying it?"

Lady Ya laughed, "You don't have to be so uptight. Tell me, why do you want me to listen to such a sad and helpless story?"

Xiang Shaolong came to her side and leaned into her, and said nonchalantly, "I only want you to guess, when the cowherd and weaving girl meets once a year, what would they do."

Lady Ya chuckled and said with a flirtatious smile, "Of course they'll do what we were doing last night!"

Xiang Shaolong was aroused by her flirtatious moves and said a little roughly, "Answer me quickly if you want Xiang Shaolong or other men like Lian Jin. You can only choose one, once you promise me I will carry you into the pavilion

² Poem by Qin Guan from Song Dynasty: *Immortals On A Magpie Bridge*.

immediately.”

Lady Ya stared at him with concentration for a moment, and replied with a smile, “If you can make another two poem verses, something as moving as the earlier verse, I will promise to become only your woman.”

Xiang Shaolong was secretly elated, and thought he will use the god of poem Li Bai’s famous words to excite her, and said offhandedly, “Have you never seen them grieving in the mirror over their white hair, silky black at dawn, snowy white at dusk.”

These two verses, to a woman, is really a sore point.

Lady Ya’s body shivered, and she lowered her head and recited it twice, limitless love flowing out from her bright eyes and she said gently, “Xiang Shaolong! You’ve won, carry me inside!”

The two of them had just entered the pavilion and was about to go into the bedroom when a pretty maid hurried up to report, “Lady! Master Lian is here.”

Xiang Shaolong was shaken and put Lady Ya down, staring at her icily, naturally he meant to say that since Lian Jin is allowed to come into your residence at will, therefore he can go into your room anytime to look for you.

Lady Ya first instructed the pretty maid, “Go and stop him, tell him I don’t wish to see him tonight.”

After the maid left, she looked at Xiang Shaolong in reproach, “Didn’t I make myself clear already?”

Before Xiang Shaolong could reply, Lian Jin's voice can be heard from downstairs calling out, "Since Lian Jin is already here, why won't Lady let me hear even a few words of your melodious voice?"

Xiang Shaolong was secretly complimenting Lian Jin for really having a way with women.

Indeed Lady Ya's expression showed she is at a loss; obviously Lian Jin has stirred some beautiful memories.

Lian Jin added, "The night is clear with the moon bright, the scenery is breathtaking. Won't Lady be lonely sleeping all alone?"

Lady Ya was shocked awake, she secretly stole a glance at Xiang Shaolong and saw his unhappy expression. She suddenly felt dislike for Lian Jin and said coquettishly, "Now you've heard my voice, leave quickly!"

Xiang Shaolong saw that she did not make things clear with Lian Jin, and knew that she still harbor some feelings for him. He felt discontented and snorted unhappily.

Lian Jin immediately called out furiously, "Who is up there!"

The guards started shouting, followed by the sounds of weapons clashing and groan of pain. Suddenly footsteps were heard coming up the pavilion and Lian Jin walked up, with guards running after him.

Lady Ya commanded the guards, "It's nothing of your business here, go down."

Lian Jin stared at Xiang Shaolong, his usual calm lost, his eyes seems to be shooting flames and he said each word slowly, "It's you again, Xiang Shaolong."

Lady Ya was about to reprimand Lian Jin when Xiang Shaolong led her towards the door and said, "Lady please go into the room."

Lady Ya has no intention of leaving these two rivals here alone, but she knows that if she does not listen to Xiang Shaolong's instructions, it would mean letting Lian Jin win. She will then forever lose this proud man, so she bit her lips and went into the room obediently.

Lian Jin saw this beauty who has never really surrendered actually surrendering to Xiang Shaolong's 'lascivious power', he was so furious that he almost coughed out blood, and was unable to speak for a moment.

Xiang Shaolong's ferocious eyes shot icily at him and said with a stern voice, "Was it you who instigated Grand Young Master yesterday to touch my Yan woman?"

Lian Jin is an extremely deep person, and after his anger subsided, his calm returned. He smiled nonchalantly, "Not only the Yan woman, even that Su Nu of yours, I was the one who informed Prince Shaoyuan to snatch her away."

Xiang Shaolong looked heavenward and laughed sadly, and when he looked at Lian Jin again, he was expressionless. He said quietly, "Fine! If I, Xiang Shaolong, allow you to live beyond the day after tomorrow, then I will change my surname to that of yours, scum!"

Naturally Lian Jin does not understand what 'scum' is, but he knows it's nothing good. He laughed and replied, "This is exactly what I want to say to you."

He then called out into the room, "When Lian Jin comes again the night after, Lady will not reject my request to be your bedroom guest!"

He laughed loudly and went downstairs.

Xiang Shaolong really felt like running after him immediately and has a duel to the death. But if he kills him, he may be executed for going against the imperial edict, so he had no choice but to swallow his displeasure.

The person responsible for Su Nu's horrendous death, now he knows clearly who it is!

But he will not let that Prince Shaoyuan off as well.

"Is your anger appeased?"

Xiang Shaolong turned around and after looking at Lady Ya who was leaning against the door for a moment, he walked over and carried her up and into the room.

Right now he feels no gentleness or sweetness at all.

What he has now is a thunderstorm of hatred. He needs to appease the pain in his heart, and his candidate is Lady Ya.

Lady Ya hugged him tightly and cried out, "Shaolong you're so good! You took me up to heaven, no man has ever treated me so wildly and strongly like you, it's really exhilarating."

Xiang Shaolong, whose anger is finally appeased, was dumbstruck. He treated her in such a beastly manner, yet she praised him from the bottom of her heart, it seems that she is really a little masochistic.

Lady Ya asked, "Why aren't you talking? I will listen to you in future, all right?"

Xiang Shaolong smiled and said, "That's more like it."

Lady Ya wriggled a little in protest, and after a while fell into a deep sleep.

However, because Xiang Shaolong took a nap earlier, and he was feeling upset about causing the death of Su Nu, he spent the whole night with his eyes wide open, thinking. He was only able to fall asleep due to weariness just before dawn.

By the time he woke up the sun was already high in the sky and secretly exclaimed to himself. If he lets himself go on like this, he won't have the energy to fight with Lian Jin tomorrow. He hurriedly got up and made up his mind not to touch women from now until his duel.

He walked out to the hall.

And was immediately stunned.

The Lady Ya who was usually dressed in finery, has changed into a simple set of clothes worn by an average woman, with a thin layer of makeup on her face. She's not even wearing her earrings, and exudes a different kind of intoxicating beauty.

She was standing on the stairs, obviously just on her way up. When she saw Xiang Shaolong she smiled broadly at him and came up to hug him, saying "Let common girl serve Master in your routine."

Xiang Shaolong laughed and asked, "You'd like to become a common girl very much?"

Lady Ya immediately nodded her head, "I want you to accompany me today to go shopping and eating."

Xiang Shaolong is now in a dilemma, he had promised Wu Tingfang last night to visit her, and Tao Fang will certainly have things to discuss with him. He also wants to find some time to accompany the lonely Shu'er. Hai! If only he knows how to split himself up.

He really felt like hardening his heart and reject Lady Ya.

But he saw that she's all excited and her expression so looking forward to the day, he can't bring himself to say anything.

After a short conversation, the two of them strolled out into the streets.

Unknowingly, as they talked and laughed, they came to the huge mansion he passed by the other day while on his way to Lady Ya's residence, which belonged to someone from another state.

Xiang Shaolong took the opportunity to ask, "Who lives in there, why is it so heavily guarded?"

Lady Ya replied, "Most of them are the hostages sent to us as peace offering by the states that we defeated."

Xiang Shaolong asked, "Are there anyone who has any special background?"

Lady Ya replied, "All of them are royalty, but the most important person would be Yi Zheng. He's the only son of Zi Chu from the state of Qin. Hai! But it's better not mentioning this person."

Xiang Shaolong asked curiously, "Do you know him?"

Lady Ya blushed, and replied a little unwillingly, "Not only do I know him, but very well too!"

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brow and asked, "Don't tell me he's one of your chamber guests as well, isn't he just a child?"

According to the depiction in the movie, Emperor Qin was only 13 when he ascended the throne, so won't he be only eight or nine now. Lady Ya won't even let children off?

Lady Ya replied, "Where did you hear that from, he's at the most two to three years younger than you!"

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, could it be that the history books have recorded it wrongly.

Lady Ya grabbed his arm and shook it, saying, "Just take it as my fault, will you please stop digging out my past affairs?"

Xiang Shaolong dared not continue his questions for fear of arousing her suspicions, secretly thinking that he'll have

more chances in future. Maybe he will be able to get to know this extraordinary famed man through her.

He suggested, "Why don't we return to the guesthouse first, see if there's anything important requiring me."

As long as she can be with him, Lady Ya has no objections and happily replied, "All right! Let me see how pretty the Yan beauty you have hidden is."

Xiang Shaolong was startled, "You know about Shu'er as well?"

Lady Ya was so happy like a carefree little girl. She puffed up her chest and said smugly, "Knowing oneself and the enemy, will win all battles, this is taught in the Art of Sun Zi. I also know that silly lass Wu Tingfang have fallen for you. Lian Jin has really lost badly to you in the battlefield of love."

Xiang Shaolong felt numb and his heart chilled on hearing it. He knows that the Wu residence is filled with King Zhao's spies, because he does not trust the Wu family who has Qin blood flowing in them.

This is no small matter, he must find a chance to tell Wu Yingyuan, or else he may face the possibility that the whole family will be executed.

He was nervous as he walked with the beauty, strolling in the busy Handan streets, stepping on the ancient pathways.

Is this a dream created by crazy Ma's machine?

Xiang Shaolong suddenly felt at a loss.

But he knows that no matter how frightening is the future, he has already fallen deeply in love with this ancient era and the beauty next to him.

VOLUME 2

CHAPTER 1

Marquis Zhao Mu

[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG and Lady Ya who was dressed as a commoner walked towards the guesthouse, talking and laughing along the way happily.

Lady Ya replied, "I've heard much about the guesthouses for warriors, but everyone advised me not to go, saying that the people in those places are complicated. The Wu guesthouse and Guo guesthouse are the most superior, warriors without some status are not even qualified to stay in there,"

Xiang Shaolong's interest was a little stirred and he said, "So the guesthouse I am staying in is so superior? I don't even know that, I'm not even sure how many warriors are staying there and who they are."

Lady Ya asked, "Don't tell me you don't even know that Lian Jin is staying there!"

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, "Really?"

No wonder he brought Wu Tingwei there the other day.

He went back in a fury last night; would he do something to Shu'er? Once he thought of that, he wished that he could sprout wings and fly back to the guesthouse.

Lady Ya was about to speak when the expression on her face suddenly turned awkward.

Xiang Shaolong followed the direction of her gaze and saw that among the passers-by at the opposite street, there's a group of 10 odd warriors surrounding aggressive looking burly man with a scarred who stood tall and straight, wearing brocade robes. He had just turned his head around and was staring at them.

Lady Ya lowered her head and told him quietly, "Go quickly!"

She walked quickly forward with Shaolong running along behind her, full of questions.

From the corner of his eyes, he saw two of the warriors leaving the group and dashing across the busy streets filled with traveling horse carriages. They ran after them and one of them called out loudly, "Lady, please hold!"

Lady Ya stopped and sighed helplessly. Xiang Shaolong can only stop together with her.

The two went up to them and gave an unfriendly stare to Xiang Shaolong first before bowing respectfully towards Lady Ya and said, "The Marquis invites Lady Ya over for a meeting."

Xiang Shaolong thought that Lady Ya would certainly refuse, but instead she sighed and said, "Go back first, and tell Marquis I will go and see him after leaving some instructions."

The two of them looked at Xiang Shaolong rudely before walking back to the street opposite.

Lady Ya looked at him in fright before lowering her head and said, "Shaolong! I'm sorry! I can't accompany you today; can I look for you a little later?"

Xiang Shaolong felt fury rising him for no reason and asked, "Who is that Marquis? Why is it that he can take you away from me with just one word?"

Lady Ya pleaded, "Please don't ask, I'm going!" And left.

Xiang Shaolong looked as Lady Ya walked towards the scar faced burley man dressed in finery among the group. He put his arms around her tiny waist and hugged her, and Xiang Shaolong felt as if someone has given him a punch to his chest.

He's getting more and more confused about the relationships among these people. With Lady Ya's status, why does she seem afraid of this Marquis, and allowed him to hug and embrace her in front of him, obviously making him lose face in the process.

He stood there stunned for a moment, with difficulty breathing, feeling extremely humiliated but with nowhere to vent his frustration.

It's really bad to get involved with a bitch, you'd never know how many other men she has. He didn't even want to know anything about this Marquis, and don't even want to see Lady Ya ever again.

Sounds of hooves beat were heard.

Xiang Shaolong was jolted from his thought and looking up, saw Li Shan and a few warriors rushing towards him in a frenzy, calling, "Brother Xiang! We just went to Lady Ya's place and were told you just left with Lady Ya."

Xiang Shaolong had a bad feeling and asked, "What is the matter?"

Li Shan cried out sadly, "Shu'er has been raped and killed!"

These words sounds like lightning striking from heaven, and

he retreated several steps in shock, knocking into a wall behind him, the blood totally gone from his face.

He flipped the blanket open; Shu'er's naked and wounded lifeless body laid coldly on the ground, the fresh blood flowing out from her eyes already coagulated into a dark black.

The thing that killed her was the red road twined around her neck, and it had cut deep into the neck. Her lower body was in a mess.

Shu'er is dead! Murdered in the most humiliating and cruel way.

Xiang Shaolong felt his body turn icy, unable to accept this reality in front of him at all.

Su Bu's death happened away from him, he did not see with his own eyes. Besides, coming to this era 2000 years ago, everything seemed surreal, and even death seems like a joke. He may have been sad but he was not overwrought, so when he was busy with other matters, he could easily put aside the matter of Su Nu's suicide, or even forget about it. But Shu'er is another matter altogether!

His heart is bleeding!

The voice of Tao Fang, who was standing next to him, seems to be coming from some place far away, saying, "When Chunying went into the room this morning, Shu'er is already like this. Hai! I really don't know what to say either; the murderer must be someone in this guesthouse."

Xiang Shaolong has no wish to ask anything at all.

The only people who would dare to touch Shu'er would be Wu Tingwei and Lian Jin. He doesn't believe that Wu Tingwei will have the guts, so the murderer must be Lian Jin. He knows that there's nothing he can do to him, at least he dare not touch him before the duel.

So he will try to deal blows to him unscrupulously.

And no one would speak up for a gift from Yan, including Tao Fang and Wu Yingyuan.

He has never felt like killing a person so much.

Tao Fang added, "Why don't you move in and stay with me! My wife and daughters all want to meet you very much."

Xiang Shaolong calmly covered Shu'er totally with the blanket, shook his head and said, "No! I am going to sleep here, but from this moment on I won't need anyone to serve me, and don't let anyone come here. Let me help Shu'er prepare for her last rites! I want to be alone with my thoughts."

Tao Fang said worriedly, "Shaolong! Don't torture yourself; tomorrow night is the crucial night where you will have your duel with Lian Jin, now the whole city is waiting to find out the outcome."

Xiang Shaolong became as calm and cold as ice and said calmly, "Don't worry! No one places more importance to the appointment tomorrow night as much as I do."

After going through so many cruel setbacks, he finally kept his blithe behavior aside and turned back into the killing machine that his era has trained him to be, a cold warrior who will use any methods in order to complete a mission.

Xiang Shaolong stayed in the room where Shu'er was murdered for the whole afternoon.

He did not wail, nor did he weep.

Only the weak will feel sadness.

In this warring states period, in this period that most people will do anything, even evil, if it can benefit themselves, only the strong will survive. When he took a look at Shu'er's body again, he deeply felt the cold heartlessness of reality, felt that this is a lawless society where the strong will rule.

If he wants revenge, he'll have to become the strongest.

When Tao Fang and the rest left the courtyard, he picked up the wooden sword and concentrated hard on practicing his swordplay, studying the intricacies of the Mozi Swordplay.

After his heart melded with his soul, he repeatedly practiced the most intricate 10 moves in the swordplay.

Mozi Swordplay places more importance in defense rather than offense, but each defensive move also hides an opportunity to attack.

If he can improve on the attacks, then the swordplay that only defends will be able to turn into something that can attack and defend at the same time. Once he thought of this,

he felt an overwhelming joy. He waved the sword and for a moment the movements were unpredictable, powerful and unconstrained.

He was getting into the swordplay and he jumped out into the hall, using the wider area to practice and at the same time incorporating his knowledge of anatomy and mechanics into the swordplay.

The sword swished, one moment it's unpredictable and formless, another moment it's powerful and free.

Every attack is an evolution from the defensive moves in the Mozi swordplay.

He roared and struck continuously over a hundred times, none of the moves using any form of defense.

He retracted his sword, moving the wooden sword to between his brows, staring straight at the sword.

A petite person ran into the hall, crying out in alarm, "Shaolong!"

Xiang Shaolong put his wooden sword down and Wu Tingfang has already thrown herself into his arms, crying piteously, "Shaolong, Shaolong!"

On one hand Xiang Shaolong pointed the sword to the floor, and with the other hand held the beauty in his arms. Once again he thought of thought of Shu'er's horrible death and felt as if all his innards are twisted together. He said sadly, "You know about Shu'er."

Wu Tingfang nodded her head, sobbing uncontrollably, feeling sad for him.

He lifted her pear-shaped but tear stained face and looked at him through her tears, saying, "Master Tao came to look for Father, asking about Brother's whereabouts. I was still upset with you then for not coming to look for me, but once I heard about Shu'er I ignored Father's opposition and came here immediately. Shaolong! Brother has been locked up by Father since yesterday morning; he definitely is not involved in this."

Xiang Shaolong nodded his head, "Don't worry! I already know who the murderer is."

Wu Tingfang lowered her head and asked quietly, "Are you suspecting Lian Jin. He... may be a proud person, but he is actually... hai! It can't be him, right?"

Xiang Shaolong sighed, "He is pursuing you, naturally he will pretend to be a gentleman in front of you. Tell me, who lured your brother to look for Shu'er?"

Wu Tingfang was at a loss for words, but she still looks as if she cannot believe Lian Jin would do something so cruel.

A dry cough sounded from outside the door and the two of them hurriedly separated.

Tao Fang walked in and made an eye at Xiang Shaolong, indicating that he has something to tell him.

Xiang Shaolong told Wu Tingfang, "Why don't Miss go back first, I'll come and see you immediately after I've settled

some matters.”

Wu Tingfang said impatiently, “No! At the most I will wait for you at a side.

Tao Fang looked at her in surprise; he did not expect such a spoiled and pampered Miss would actually be so clingy and obedient towards Xiang Shaolong.

Xiang Shaolong said helplessly, “All right then! You can sit here for a while, I’ll go with Master Tao to the garden and have our talk and ask him to do something for me!”

Wu Tingfang saw that he did not allow her to listen to his conversation with Tao Fang and was initially unhappy, until she heard the last sentence, and she agreed happily.”

The two of them went to the garden and Tao Fang’s expression was somber. He was quiet for a moment before saying, “Does Shaolong know who the person who really wields power in Handan is?”

Xiang Shaolong asked in surprise, “Isn’t it his Majesty?”

Tao Fang surveyed the quiet garden, and after making there there’s no one around besides the warriors near the entrance, he put his hand on his shoulder and said quietly, “On the surface it seems that he has the greatest power, but there is one person who can influence and control him. This person is the real ruler of Zhao.”

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows, “Who can influence his Majesty?”

Tao Fang smiled bitterly, "It's his man?"

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed hoarsely, "What?"

Tao Fang sighed, "It's a known fact that our Majesty likes men. According to the news from the Palace, every time our Majesty sees this person, he will change into female clothing, do you understand my meaning!"

Xiang Shaolong asked in surprise, "Who is this person?"

And secretly thought, no wonder Wu Yingyuan has no wish of marrying Wu Tingfang into the Palace, and the King of Zhao is willing to give up a great beauty like Wu Tingfang.

Tao Fang lowered his voice, "It's the Marquis of Julu, Zhao Mu. This person is the best strategist and swordsman in the state of Zhao. He also has a lot of highly skilled exponents under him, and he often has strange and mysterious guests from all over the world. He is the most powerful person after our ruler Zhao Sheng."

Xiang Shaolong remembered the Marquis who forcefully summoned Lady Ya, without a doubt he must be Zhao Mu. No wonder Lady Ya is so afraid of him, and asked, "Is Lady Ya his woman?"

Tao Fang was stunned and asked, "How did you know?"

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly told him what happened that morning.

Tao Fang's expression looked even worse and after asking more questions, he said, "To the Marquis of Ju Lu, Zhao Ya is

only one of his interesting toys. He possesses countless beautiful women and men, and in the past he bet on the fact that once Prince Pingyuan passes away, he will have no more worries. Now, besides my Master, Guo Zhong and a few senior generals, the rest all paid him no heed. The rest of the royalty is angry with him but dare not speak out.”

Xiang Shaolong felt this is all a headache, but at least he is now clearer on the power balance in the state of Zhao.

Tao Fang added generously, “Before the battle of Chang Ping, our state may be isolated further away, our people and land are less comparatively, but our army is unparalleled in the world. We have well versed strategists like Lin Xiangru who kept thwarting the evil plans of the Qins, military men like Zhao She, Lian Po, Li Mu and Prince Pingyuan Zhao Sheng is both well versed in literature and martial arts. With him as the premier, there’s nothing the Qins can do to us. But after King Hui and this generation of famous officials and generals passed away, our King Xiaocheng does not even use his head. Instead he listened to the words of Zhao Kuo, the son of Zhao She, and resulting in the terrible battle at Changping, making us turn into a weak country from a strong one. What a pity.”

Xiang Shaolong remembered that the person responsible for this battle of Changping, Zhao Kuo, is the husband of Lady Ya, so he took the chance to ask, “Why did his Majesty use Zhao Kuo to replace Lian Po?”

Tao Fang shook his head and said sadly, “It’s all because he’s

eloquent. This person is born good looking, and good at analyzing, adept in the art of military studies. When he debates, even his father Zhao She, who has defeated the huge Qin army with a lot less men cannot win him. But Zhao She thinks that he's not good enough to be a general. That's why when his Majesty wanted to appoint him as a general, even Madam Zhao She objected. It's just that his Majesty was persuaded by his pretty words and grand plans and insisted on his decision."

Xiang Shaolong was baffled, "Why would Zhao She think so badly of his son?"

Tao Fang sighed, "Because Zhao She can see that his precious son thinks too highly of his own intelligence and refuses to listen to others. He only knows how to theorize and is obstinate. No one can win him in a debate, but he cannot win anyone in a fight."

He continued with anger, "The battle of Changping, he was at a most advantageous position, and the previous commander Lian Po did the groundwork for him as well, cutting the resources of the Qin soldiers who are far from home and tiring them out. Who would have expected that once he arrived, he ordered the whole army to leave the city and rashly went into the enemy's territory? In the end not only did the Qins counterattacked and forced them back into the city and cut off their line of supply. In slightly over a month their rations were used up and the city taken over. The Qins attacked and went on a murderous spree that is the most cruel in history. There's no way his Majesty can

defend himself on his decision, if he had not changed Lian Po with Zhao Kuo, this would not have happened.”

He then lowered his voice and continued, “Eldest Young Master Yingyuan is disillusioned with his Majesty because of this matter, does Shaolong understand now?”

Xiang Shaolong knows that Tao Fang has received instructions from Wu Yingyuan, and totally trusts him now. He asked, “Why did Master Tao suddenly mention the Marquis of Ju Lu, Zhao Mu?”

Tao Fang said seriously, “Because he came with Lian Jin last night to the guesthouse, and only left at dawn. And to use red ropes to kill beauties, happens to be one of his many hobbies, he has done it quite a few times.”

Xiang Shaolong was startled, “What?”

Tao Fang replied, “Don’t be agitated, and you must not act rashly, or else you will be killed. Although he usually does not bother about Zhao Ya’s affairs, but for the first time Zhao Ya kept you overnight for two nights, so his jealousy is certainly aroused. After the instigation and plan offered by that evil thief Lian Jin, who knows how to use others to do the killing best, this happened. That’s why Lian Jin has his support in the duel tomorrow, and will certainly try his best to kill you. But if you kill Lian Jin, he will maneuver his Majesty into punishing you. I’ve discussed this situation with Eldest Young Master, and decided to let you know the situation.”

Once again Xiang Shaolong wishes that he has a heavy

machine gun in his hands, a pity that he only has a wooden sword. There are some things that even the Master Wu cannot help, much less Wu Yingyuan or Tao Fang.

Tao Fang advised him, "You better not leave the house so often for these few days. If you can defeat Lian Jin and gain the trust of his Majesty, Zhao Mu may change his attitude towards you. By then Eldest Young Master will have another grand plan, but everything can only be revealed after the duel."

The corners of Xiang Shaolong's mouth revealed a slightly cruel smile and said, "I know what to do."

Tao Fang felt a shiver down his heart and reminded him, "When you see Zhao Mu, you must pretend that nothing happened. This person is narrow minded and if you offend him, he will certainly take revenge."

Xiang Shaolong smiled bitterly in his heart, what kind of a world is this.

By the time he returned to the room, Wu Tingfang is already pouting from the wait.

Xiang Shaolong is still pained over the death of Shu'er and has no mood to be intimate with her. After having a short heart-to-heart talk with her, he asked, "If there comes a day I have to leave the state of Zhao, would Fang'er be willing to let go of everything else and come far away with me?"

Wu Tingfang was stunned, "But what about Father and Mother?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "Let's not think about them first, I'm only asking for your thoughts."

Obviously Wu Tingfang is not used to having her own ideas, and replied after some hesitation, "Of course I will follow you, but Father and Mother must not be affected."

Xiang Shaolong replied understandingly, "Of course, I won't care only about myself and not care about your parents and family."

Wu Tingfang shifted over happily and threw herself into his arms, pouted her cute little mouth and asked, "Shaolong! Will you kiss me?"

It's the first time she's experienced this, naturally she's not sick of it yet.

There's no way Xiang Shaolong could reject her, and besides this is not a painful task, so he hugged and kissed her.

In a short while Wu Tingfang was writhing, her face burning, and proactively massaged his shoulder blades.

Xiang Shaolong remembered that he has to preserve his strength and was secretly startled. He left her sweet mouth, and coercing and pacifying her, managed to force her to go home.

Tao Fang and a large group of warriors are already waiting for her at the main door with horses, and when he saw Xiang Shaolong escorting her out, he heaved a sigh of relieve.

After what happened to Shu'er and Su Nu, no one dared to

be lax about any woman who is close to Xiang Shaolong. Although Wu Tingfang's status is different from the other two women who died terribly, but no one can guarantee that the same thing will not happen to her. And no one will be able to take responsibility for that outcome.

Before she got up the horse, Wu Tingfang held Xiang Shaolong and said, "I can only see you tomorrow night. Grandfather has promised to bring me into the Palace to see your duel, you must not lose!"

She was about to get up the horse when Lian Jin walked out from the guesthouse and called loudly, "Grand Young Miss, please hold!"

When enemies meet, they cannot see eye to eye with each other.

But Xiang Shaolong already has a plan, and did not reveal any of his inner feelings at all. He even moved to the side to look at the reaction Wu Tingfang has towards this ex-boyfriend.

Lian Jin did not even glance at Xiang Shaolong or Tao Fang, but just took large strides towards Wu Tingfang.

Wu Tingfang stole a glance at Xiang Shaolong, and replied a little helplessly, "Brother Lian! I'm in a hurry to go home."

Lian Jin looked at her deeply, his face broke out into a smile that will charm any woman and said gently, "Then let brother here send you back!"

Wu Tingfang was surprised and after stealing another look at

the expressionless Xiang Shaolong, she shook her head, "There's no need! Master Tao will send me back."

Lian Jin looked heavenward and laughed, sweeping an unhappy gaze and Xiang Shaolong, Tao Fang and the rest before sneering, "He can't even protect his own woman, so how can they be good enough to protect Grand Young Miss."

The expressions on Tao Fang and the 10 odd warriors darkened at once, but Xiang Shaolong was calm as usual, not revealing the anger burning in his heart, but only watching with cold eyes.

Tao Fang exclaimed furiously, "Lian Jin you better be careful with your words."

Wu Tingfang was never really that polite to Tao Fang in the past, but because of Xiang Shaolong, she likes whomever he trusts, and said, "How can you say that, go back quickly, I don't need you to escort me."

Lian Jin looked at Xiang Shaolong from the side of his eyes and said with an icy smile towards Wu Tingfang, "Has Grand Young Miss forgot our everlasting oath to each other?"

Wu Tingfang threw a glance at Xiang Shaolong in fear and stamped her feet, "Don't talk nonsense, who made everlasting..."

Lian Jin smiled and said, "We'll argue after tomorrow night!" And he told Xiang Shaolong confidently, "Just wait and see! Now even Lady Ya will not be able to protect you."

And left after saying these words.

Wu Tingfang has never been thus humiliated and she cried out, "I am going to tell Grandfather."

Lian Jin's reply is a loud laughter, as if he can't be bothered about Master Wu as well.

Xiang Shaolong and Tao Fang exchanged a look, both feeling that something is not right.

Will Zhao Mu really back him up; why else would he be so haughty?

Xiang Shaolong has just returned to the room when someone reported to him that Lady Ya has sent a horse carriage for him.

Xiang Shaolong remembered what happened this morning and fury rising up so he rejected her.

After dinner, he studied the Mozi swordplay again, and felt that it is really profound and marvelous to be able to push the human body beyond borders.

As he was engrossed in it, Lady Ya has arrived personally.

Xiang Shaolong continued ignoring her, until she threw herself into his arms before he asked with furrowed brows, "Why do you still come here?"

Lady Ya cried sadly, "Shaolong! I'm sorry."

Xiang Shaolong was about to speak when he felt as if his neck has been bitten by a poisonous mosquito and he looked at her in surprise, only to see her holding a fine

needle in her slender fingers. The sharp end of the needle shone with a strange green tint, he felt his senses getting hazy and lost consciousness.

CHAPTER 2

The Trap Of Lust

[Translated by JEAN]

WHEN Lady Ya's men were carrying him up the carriage, Xiang Shaolong woke up but his body still felt weak.

Lady Ya sat in the carriage and let him put his head on her lap, gently caressing his hair, once in a while sighing, obviously unaware that he has regained consciousness.

Xiang Shaolong did not find it strange at all. Because she does not know that he has undergone 'anti-body training' for drugs before and was injected with many kinds of antibodies, and is able with withstand many times more

than the average person various kinds of medication and poison.

The poison from the needle could have been cultivated from plants. It can cause him to lose consciousness and strength temporarily but will not harm his body or cause long term damage. By now he feels that his body is slowly regaining its strength.

Why would she want to deal with him?

He felt a strange sensation on his face; it turns out to be Lady Ya's tears dripping onto his face.

The carriage moved, obviously no one dared to stop her carriage.

Lady Ya sighed daintily and mumbled, "Shaolong do not blame me, I am forced to do it. If I don't, we'll all end up in a bad state."

Xiang Shaolong is not an idiot, so how can he not guess that this is the plot of the Marquis of Ju Lu, Zhao Mu. However he could not figure out why he would plan this, no matter how bold he is, he wouldn't dare to harm him so openly right? But why would he help an 'outsider' like Lian Jin deal with him who should be 'one of his men'?"

Lady Ya's anxious breathing calmed, and she remained silent.

Naturally Xiang Shaolong continued to pretend to be unconsciousness and took the opportunity to rest so that he can deal with the enemy's next step.

The carriage suddenly stopped. Followed by the sound of the door opening.

Lady Ya's dainty body shook and she quietly exclaimed, "Marquis!"

The Marquis came into the carriage, the door closed and the carriage continued on its way.

Lady Ya's breathing hastened again and she asked in shock, "What are you going to do?"

A melodious and deep voice said, "Nothing! Just testing his reaction."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly sneering to himself, already know what the other party is planning to do and thought to himself that he knows how this is done as well. He concentrated and willed his body to relax.

Indeed he felt a sharp pain on his thigh, and he was stabbed by the other party's sharp weapon.

Lady Ya asked, "Do you not trust me?"

Zhao Mu laughed, "It's better to play safe, how I would know that you will not join forces with him to trick me?"

Lady Ya was thinking of protesting when her body suddenly leaned forward and her tiny mouth made gurgling noises, obviously the other party is now kissing her.

Xiang Shaolong even felt the Marquis hand going over his prone body, roaming all over Lady Ya's body. Listening to the sound of the clothes, Zhao Mu's hands must have reached

into Lady Ya's clothing.

Lady Ya moaned daintily.

Zhao Mu laughed lecherously, "You're bitch, getting more and more well endowed."

Lady Ya panted, "Haven't you tortured me enough today?" and she continued moaning again.

Although Xiang Shaolong could not see, he can imagine all the awful things that is happening and felt a surge of jealousy. He forced himself to suppress that feeling and vowed never to harbor any more love for Lady Ya. Especially when this wanton is writhing so much, obviously unable to withstand the ministrations of the other party.

The Lady Ya now is worthless in his mind.

Zhao Mu let go of Lady Ya and smiled evilly, "You want it again?"

Lady Ya leaned weakly on the back of the chair, her whole body heated and did not make a sound.

Zhao Mu said with a chuckle, "If I were to marry you, Zhao Ya will you give up this lad and follow me?"

Lady Ya sighed and said, "Marquis don't make fun of me, the one you took a fancy to is Wu Tingfang, why would it be a hated and used person like me?"

Zhao Mu who is sitting opposite her reached his hand out to caresses her breast again and laughed, "It's so bouncy, so how can it be used. Fine! I won't force you, as long as you

listen to me and work for me, this lad will be yours tomorrow night.”

Xiang Shaolong finally understood, no wonder Zhao Mu hated him so much, it's all because of this exquisite beauty Wu Tingfang.

Lady Ya allowed herself to be molested and moaned, “I really do not understand, even if Xiang Shaolong lose, Master Wu will definitely not give his precious granddaughter to you, so what's the use of you dealing with Xiang Shaolong?”

Zhao Mu replied smugly, “I have my plans; you do not have to concern yourself. Hei! Tell me, between this lad and me, whose touch gives you the most pleasure?” He increased the intensity of his touches.

Lady Ya stammered, “Of course it's you who makes me feel better.”

Zhao Mu's voice turned icy as he asked, “Then why is it when I used this lad to do an exchange with you, you surrendered immediately?”

Lady Ya exclaimed quietly, “Marquis your hands are hurting me.”

Zhao Mu asked furiously, “Answer me first!”

Xiang Shaolong was so furious he almost wanted to draw his dagger and kill him, but of course he cannot do that, because he has a bigger goal, which is to kill Lian Jin.

Lady Ya replied helplessly, "Because you only have lust for me, but for him, besides lust, there's love as well."

Zhao Mu released Lady Ya, and after a long moment he calmed down enough to say, "After he's awake, Cuiniang will feed him one 'Lust' pill. If you cannot handle it yourself, then ask Cuiniang to replace you, you must not force yourself. After that let him sleep deeply for six hours before waking him up.

Lady Ya asked worriedly, "Will it really be alright?"

Zhao Mu smiled icily, "Look at how concerned you are over him, I really feel like killing this lad. Don't worry! Besides expanding a lot of energy because of the aphrodisiac, everything else will be the same. It's just that he will be destined to lose in that duel with Lian Jin. Remember, you have to accompany Lian Jin tomorrow night, and after that I will not bother in your affairs in future"

The carriage stopped.

After Zhao Mu left the carriage, the horse started moving again.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly exclaiming that it's a close shave. This is indeed a devious plan, using women to cause him harm without leaving any trace, formidable indeed.

Luckily he is Xiang Shaolong. If it's anyone else, that person won't even know how he died, and may even blame himself for not being able to control his lust.

Xiang Shaolong was carried into Lady Ya's bedroom and after

the servants left, only Lady Ya and that woman called Cuiniang whom the Marquis has ordered to supervise them were around.

He was secretly cracking his brain, how can he hide from these two women? If the aphrodisiac melts on contact with the mouth, he won't have enough time to spit it out.

Footsteps were heard moving away.

Xiang Shaolong took the risk and peeped through his lids, and saw Lady Ya with a voluptuous and flirtatious looking woman standing a distance away, arguing about something.

He had a flash of idea, and tore away a corner of his shirt and stuffed it into his mouth, sealing the food passage.

The two ladies walked back again and Lady Ya exclaimed unhappily, "Is the Marquis really that distrustful of me!"

Cuiniang replied obsequiously, "Lady please forgive me, the Marquis ordered me to witness the whole process. He's already giving Lady a face, or else he loves to see such things the most. If it is not me but him watching the whole thing, Lady would be even more embarrassed."

Lady Ya did not protest further, and quietly accepted this arrangement. He could hear the sound of the wax pill being opened, followed by a strange fragrance wafting into his nose.

A pill about the size of a thumb was stuffed into his mouth, dropping right into the piece of torn cloth.

Cuiniang said with a laugh, "Done! This pill melts on contact with the tongue and will flow into the throat. No matter how chaste or strong willed that person is, he will not be able to fight it."

The aphrodisiac may have been separated by a piece of cloth, but it's swiftly melting.

Cuiniang said as she walked away, "Let me get some water to wake him up."

Lady Ya ran after her and asked, "What if he wakes up and found out that I've given him aphrodisiac, won't he hate me then?"

Xiang Shaolong was afraid that the aphrodisiac will seep through the wet cloth into his throat and was just lamenting about it when he saw this chance to hurriedly spit out the cloth and hid it under the pillow.

Cuiniang replied with a laugh, "Don't worry! He's under the influence of the drug and will be in a semiconscious state. The only thing he knows is that he must do his best, so Lady just enjoy yourself! I can see that he's as strong as an ox, maybe Lady will beg me to take over later!"

Lady Ya gave a cold snort, feeling offended.

Cuiniang does not seem to be afraid of her and left with a coquettish smile.

Lady Ya returned to his side, heaved a sigh, and loosened his clothes.

After a moment Cuiniang returned and cleaned his face with cold water, and was baffled, "This person's constitution must be really unique, his skin has not even turned red."

Xiang Shaolong laughed secretly to himself, and with a roar, pretended that the drug has taken effect and hugged the two women. At the same time using the moves he learnt from military training, he used his thumb to press hard on the acupoint behind their necks. Before they have a chance to scream, they collapsed from the pressure of the thumb.

They will only lose consciousness for a few minutes, but it's enough for him to start his plan.

He took out the damp cloth from under the pillow and after feeding them half of the melted, gluey aphrodisiac each, Xiang Shaolong sat calmly at the side.

In a short moment their skin turned fresh red, they started twisting and moaning, and slowly regained consciousness.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly exclaiming that the drug is formidable, and retreated to a corner to see what will happen. When the two women were in the throes of passion, they do not care if the other party is male or female. When they started tearing each other's clothes, he put his mind at ease.

So a little aphrodisiac is already so formidable, if he were to swallow the whole pill, he won't be able to take it even is his body is made from metal. Lady Ya and Cuiniang's actions were becoming more and more intolerable, the bedroom was filled with their moans and screams.

Xiang Shaolong closed his eyes and meditated according to how Yuan Zong taught him, eliminating all thoughts from his mind, blocking out the sounds in the room. Without knowing how much time has passed, when the two ladies were finally quiet, he opened his eyes.

The two women were lying in a messy heap on the rug, their chests heaving, and asleep from extreme fatigue.

Xiang Shaolong smiled, burned the piece of cloth over the lamp before lying down between the two women and pulled the blanket over the three of them and went to sleep.

That night he dreamt of a bleeding Shu'er, crying piteously for him to avenge her. He screamed and struggled to wake up from this nightmare, and it's already noon.

The two ladies were gone and only a pretty maid was waiting at the side. When she saw that he's awake, she immediately knelt down and paid her respects, saying, "The Eldest Young Master Wu is waiting for Master Xiang at the main hall, is Master Xiang all right!"

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be trembling and dizzy and called out, "Water! Get me some water!"

The pretty maid smiled, "Master Xiang has over-exerted yourself last night. Lady was like you too."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly laughing that the maid is just like the mistress, she doesn't seem to be of good character. He reached out and grabbed her tender bosom.

The pretty maid left with a smile.

Xiang Shaolong put on an act and pretended to be uneasy on his feet, staggering into the hall.

Wu Yingyuan and Tao Fang was accompanied by the listless looking Lady Ya, and on seeing him, they both looked furious, thinking that he has let himself down so terribly.

When Lady Ya saw him coming out, she looked guilt-stricken. She stood up and was about to speak when Xiang Shaolong fell over and fainted on the floor.

This move spared the need for all talk.

He decided to hide this from Wu Yingyuan and Tao Fang for the time being as well so that Zhao Mu and Lian Xin will really believe their plan worked and will fall into his trap instead.

Wu Yingyuan and Tao Fang were angry and anxious, and hurriedly sent him back to the guesthouse.

When they put him on the rug, Wu Yingyuan said seriously, "Something's wrong, I think Shaolong has been deviously tricked by Lady Ya. Master Tao, go and get Miracle Hand Huang here, see if he can recover his strength before the duel."

After he spoke he heaved a long sigh, full of regret and anger.

Xiang Shaolong snapped open his eyes and sat up.

The both of them were startled, and stared at him dumbly.

Xiang Shaolong smiled helplessly, "If I were to keep on

pretending to be unconscious, it'll be more difficult than giving me a beating."

The two of them were ecstatic and hurriedly asked him what was happening. After Xiang Shaolong told them the whole process, the two of them laughed so hard they were clutching their bellies.

Wu Yingyuan hurriedly told Tao Fang to instruct the other warriors to guard the guesthouse and not allow anyone to come in.

Tao Fang sat down after he returned and said, "Shaolong is really formidable. The poison from the needle must have been cultivated from the sap of the fainting grass. Once injected into the bloodstream, even a horse will lose consciousness, but I didn't expect that you'll have no fear of it."

Wu Yingyuan replied, "Heaven must be on our side, how Shaolong intends to make use of this advantage?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "I'll just react according to circumstances! I will definitely shock that Zhao Mu and Lian Jin."

Tao Fang said, "Lady Ya sent someone over to ask about your situation earlier, I've chased that person away. If she comes and see you personally, do you want to see her?"

Wu Yingyuan replied, "It's better not to meet."

Xiang Shaolong said, "The aphrodisiac may be formidable, but hearing what Zhao Mu said, it seems that one will

recover some of his strength after sleeping for a few hours, but will definitely not be able to handle an intense fight!”

Wu Yingyuan replied, “That is the reason, or else if Lian Jin was to win without a fight, how can he show off in front of his Majesty and all the court officials.

Xiang Shaolong agreed, “I agree with Eldest Young Master’s words. I should not see anyone at all, and let the enemy think that I’m trying my best to regain my strength, then I won’t have to put on so much of an act tonight.”

Tao Fang replied, “But at least Shaolong must pretend to be tired. Before we leave I will put some gray powder on your face, then nothing will go wrong.”

Once they said this, the three of them can’t help but chortle again.

The Zhao Palace is in the middle of Handan city, surrounded by walls everywhere, the river moat deep and broad, it’s almost like a city within a city.

The feast will be held in the Xiangrui Great Hall in the Palace.

The King of Zhao’s imperial seat was on the north facing the main door, on both sides there were each 40 tables placed, all facing the large empty plaza in the middle. There were two rows of tables front and back, each table can seat 10 people. Those seated in the front rows are naturally for royalty and the senior court officials, while the tables behind are for their families and warriors with special status.

The nearer the tables are to the King of Zhao, the higher

ranking the people. Master Wu and Guo Zhong, the two most wealthiest people, are seated on the third table on the left and third table on the right respectively. As such it can be seen how important these two people are in Zhao.

After all the guests entered, they went to their own tables and sat down. They placed their heads close to each other as they spoke, not daring to make any loud noises. The atmosphere was tense and serious.

When Master Wu walked in with the dazzling dressed Wu Tingfang and Wu Tingwei, they immediately captured the attention of everyone, firstly because of Wu Tingfang's outstanding beauty, but all the more because the two contestants in the duel tonight are both swordsmen from the Wu Mansion.

Guo Zhong, who was already seated, stood up and walked over. After saying a few polite words, he went nearer to his ear and whispered, "I heard that last night Xiang Shaolong even went to Lady Ya's place for fun. How can he accomplish anything great if he lets himself down thus, it seems that he will certainly lose tonight."

This Guo Zhong was average sized, about 40 years old, his face fair and without a beard but his eyes were bright and smart. When he spoke he is full of expressions, and seems like a person with no ill intent. But all who know him well know how good he is at hiding daggers behind his smiles.

Master Wu, who is at least two sizes taller and larger than him was secretly furious, on one hand unhappy that Xiang

Shaolong is so lax, on the other hand because Guo Zhong was insinuating that he is blind to place his bets on the wrong person to duel with the invincible Lian Jin. He can only smile condescendingly and said, "You have a lot of men under you, why don't you find someone for a duel and let us have an eye-opener."

As the two of them were debating, Zhao Mu, with a long sword scar starting from the lobe of his left ear and ending on the corner of his mouth, together with the beautiful yet tired looking Lady Ya arrived under the protection of a few warriors. All the court officials hurriedly paid their respects to him, which shows how unique his status is.

Zhao Mu stood straight, his shoulders broad, the scar on his face did not make him become ugly instead it added to his male attraction. Although he is more than 30, he is very well maintained and handsome looking. His brows are exceptionally thing, the bridge of his nose hooked like an eagle, paired with his long and slim yet shiny eyes, he gives others the feeling that he is not to be trifled with.

He saw Wu Tingfang who is next to Master Wu and his eyes shone immediately. He went forward and said, "Miss Tingfang, it's been a long time since we met."

After Wu Tingfang paid her respects, she said coldly, "Marquis, how do you do!"

Master Wu and Guo Zhong dared not be rude, so they turned around and greeted him as well.

Right at this time there was a commotion near the door, it

turns out to be Wu Hei who has come in with the proud and handsome looking Lian Jin who is dressed in warrior's attire.

Lian Jin looked energetic and smug, greeting everyone with a smile, and at the same time flirting with the beauties with his eyes.

By now almost all the guests have arrived. The women tied their hair up in the palace fashion and were formally dressed for the feast, either wearing jewelry that was embroidered on their clothes, swaying along or they were wearing long robes reaching the knees, revealing the underskirt, with a coat hanging on them. When their hands extend from the broad sleeves, matching gold bangles coiled around the arms, with jade rings on their slender fingers and pearls on their ears. The jade belt around their waist hung fragrance pouches, and for a moment the fragrance and the dazzling display is enough to make one dizzy.

The men were wearing crowns on their head, long robes, and the back of their robes sewn to look like a swallow's tail; looked like an opposing complement to the ladies.

Wu Tingfang has heard about how Lady Ya forcefully invited Xiang Shaolong to her residence, and saw that everyone's attention was on Lian Jin. She moved over to Lady Ya's side and whispered angrily into her ear, "Why did you harm Shaolong. If anything happens to him, I will not let you off."

Lady Ya was stunned for a moment, and when she was speechless, Lian Jin had walked over with large strides. She thought of how she has to accompany him tonight, and for a

moment felt shame and anger, and lowered her head.

Wu Hei (Hei = black), who is next to Lian Jin, really lives up to his name. His face and eyes were dark, his body short and stout with a square face and large ears, but his eyes were long and narrow. He made Lian Jin who is at least a head taller than him looks dashing in comparison.

Lian Jin first paid his respects to Zhao Mu, Master Wu and Guo Zhong but when his gaze shifted over to Wu Tingfang and Lady Ya, a strange, complicated expression flashed past his eyes.

By then another few senior court officials joined their circle, and the atmosphere became more celebratory.

Lian Jin was thinking of slipping over and flirting with the two ladies when Zhao Mu suddenly said, "If Boss Wu agrees, I would like to invite Lian Jin to be seated at my table."

Everyone was stunned. By saying that, Zhao Mu is opening asking for Lian Jin from Master Wu, to place Lian Jin under his banner.

Lian Jin did not expect him to do this and was extremely surprised. The expression of Wu Hei's face changed. If Lian Jin were to agree, then he can forget about staying on in the Wu family.

Master Wu was secretly furious, but he smiled on the surface and said, "If Lian Jin wants to, why I would not agree."

Obviously he's making Lian Jin decide.

Lian Jin was secretly cursing Zhao Mu. It must be known that people in this era places much importance on loyalty between master and servant. A mercenary must be loyal to his master, never to waver in his whole life. Now that Zhao Mu has forced him to make a decision, if he agrees, others will certainly ostracize him. In the end the only way he can survive is if he works only for Zhao Mu.

But he is now placed in a difficult position, so he gritted his teeth and replied, "I thank Marquis for your compliment, how dare I refuse."

Everyone was quiet, and looked at Master Wu.

After all Master Wu has been through a lot of experiences, and he laughed loudly, "Lian Jin, you must try your best to fight for his Marquis's glory tonight, you can only win and not lose!"

The underlying meaning is that if he loses, he can forget about staying on in Handan.

Lian Jin and Zhao Mu exchanged looks and laughed at the same time.

Master Wu and Guo Zhong are all wily old foxes, and once they heard the smugness hidden in the laughter, they knew that something must be going on, and both looked towards Lady Ya who still had her head bowed at the same time.

Naturally Lady Ya knows why the two of them were laughing so happily, and suddenly felt an overwhelming regret. She thought of how Xiang Shaolong will be humiliated in front of

others later, and quickly walked towards the second table on the left to hide herself.

“Dang!”

The bell sounded, reminding everyone to be seated.

Master Wu was even more unhappy with Xiang Shaolong, and was secretly cursing Tao Fang and Wu Yingyuan, blaming them for being late.

Close to a thousand royalty, officials and families hurriedly went to their seats, the 80 tables on both sides filled to the brim, preparing for the grandest palace feast after the feast they had when the Yan soldiers were defeated.

Everyone were just seated, and before the arrival of the King of Zhao, Xiang Shaolong arrived calmly into the hall with the wooden sword hung on his waist, accompanied by Tao Fang and Wu Yingyuan.

Everyone there had more or less heard about how he was carried out of Lady Ya’s residence this morning, and when they saw him arriving, they began sizing him up.

Besides looking a little ashen, Xiang Shaolong looks quite normal. His beautiful physique and his height, which is a little taller than Lian Jin, really makes him the dream hero of all girls.

Zhao Mu and Lian Jin, who was next to him, exchanged looks, secretly laughing that the Xiang Shaolong now only looks good on the outside, but is totally useless.

Lady Ya can't help but steal a look at him, her heart quietly crying tears of regret. She has caused him such harm, the whole city already knows about it, so how can he not know? Will he forgive her? And she can't help but hate herself for caving in under Zhao Mu's lustful force, but it's too late for regrets now. If Lian Jin goes back on his word and harms him, she can only kill herself to repay him.

Master Wu saw that his steps were still steady and was relieved. He chuckled, "Shaolong, come over!"

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly walked towards him.

CHAPTER 3
The Duel In The Palace
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG sat down next to Wu Tingfang and she hurriedly leaned over and asked with concern, "Shaolong are you all right! I am so worried, and last night you were even at that slut's place."

And she pinched him hard on his thigh under the table.

Xiang Shaolong looked at the delicacies filling the table, reached his hand out and caressed her thigh and laughed quietly, "Don't worry! Just trust your future husband!"

Wu Tingfang's body went soft under his touch, and on one

hand wanted him to be even bolder but on the other hand afraid that she may not be able to take it and let others see through her. She was so frightened that she hurriedly sat properly, and luckily Xiang Shaolong's five fingered army finally retreated.

A tall and thin gentleman with a pale face seated at the second table in front turned his head around and stared at Xiang Shaolong who was seated on the third table at the back row, his glance filled with the intent to create trouble.

Tao Fang who was next to Xiang Shaolong told him, "That would be the Prince of Shaoyuan, Zhao De."

Xiang Shaolong looked back at him coldly, his eyes shooting out rays of ice. That Zhao De did not back down but stared back at him, and the warriors seated at the surrounding tables also turned back and stared at him angrily. The air was charged with explosives.

"Dang!"

The bell rung again.

The sounds of bamboo instruments are heard, a group of musicians blew on their instruments as they walked in and stood at the two sides, continuing with the music.

Only now did Prince Shaoyuan took back his stare and looked at the main door.

With the accompaniment of his concubines, King Xiaocheng of Zhao, aged around 30, walked into the hall, with over 100 followers walking behind him. Half of them went to stand

around the tables, the other half following the King of Zhao towards the main seating area set aside for him.

The King of Zhao has a pale face tinged red from alcohol, his features quite handsome, his eyes bright and forehead broad, quite good looking overall. However he's just a little thin, his lips are not thick enough, and looks like a young greenhorn.

On his head he wore a headgear with a board, rounded in front and squared behind, with 10 strands of pearls strung with red and green threads hanging from the end of the board, signifying his status as King.

His dragon robe was sewn with diagrams of the sun, moon, stars, dragons etc, looking extremely grand.

He walked alone to the main table, his concubines sat at the three tables behind him while the guards stood protectively at the two sides and the back. He really exuded the aura of the King of the state.

Everyone knelt on the floor, waiting for him to be seated.

After the King of Zhao sat down, he said gently, "Please rise and take a seat."

After everyone called out greetings, they returned to their seats.

Naturally there are palace maids who will pour the wine for the guests.

The King of Zhao raised his cup and said, "King Xi of Yan

thinks too highly of himself, and sent Li Fu and Qing Qin to attack us but were badly defeated by us. Now General Lian Po has brought troops to surround Yan under my orders. I think King Xi of Yan can forget about a good night's sleep. Let's drink a toast to us defeating Yan!"

Everyone cheered and the atmosphere was celebratory.

The King of Zhao suddenly stood up, and the rest were so startled they hurriedly stood up as well. He laughed, "The success of defeating Yan this time is due to the hard work of all my beloved officials. If Master Wu did not provide the warhorses and food supplies, Master Guo did not supply weapons and ships. I'm afraid we would not have succeeded. Let us all drink a toast to both of them."

Everyone took another drink heartily.

Master Wu and Guo Zhong were both overwhelmed and ecstatic.

Xiang Shaolong who did not have an initial good impression of him, had a change of heart and secretly thought that a person who can become the ruler, his bearing is indeed different from others.

After the King of Zhao invited everyone to be seated and enjoy the dishes, his hands clapped, emitting a crisp sound.

The musicians who had retreated to both sides of the main door immediately started playing again.

A group of nearly 200 beauties with their hair combed like a swallow's tail, wearing light veils made from translucent

material danced into the hall like flying birds. The semi hidden bosoms and silken legs made various marvelous poses, capturing one's attention.

Everyone clapped and cheered, the applause was deafening.

Xiang Shaolong watched as the dancers sang and danced daintily, and can't help but think about Ting Fangshi, who was given away, and think about if he defeats Lian Jin, he will be able to get her back, and can't help but feel a gush of bravery.

Wu Tingfang whispered proudly in his ear, "Fang'er's song and dance is a lot better than theirs. I will let you have a good look when there's a chance."

Xiang Shaolong replied, "But you must not wear any item of clothing."

Wu Tingfang rolled her eyes at him, and gave him a sweet smile.

Zhao Mu and Lian Jin, who were keeping an eye on Wu Tingfang, was fuming at the scene, and were consoling themselves that Xiang Shaolong will be in trouble later.

The dancers retreated, leaving behind only their fragrance.

Everyone's gaze shifted to the King of Zhao, holding their breath and waiting for him to speak.

The hall was huge, but it's so quiet you can hear a pin drop.

The King of Zhao sat alone at his dragon throne, overlooking his subjects. He laughed long and loud and said, "The State

of Zhao started with a military background, and we have a lot of famous generals, Zhao Shuai, Zhao Dun, Zhao Wu were our distinguished forefathers, their military exploits unparalleled at their time. After they established the country, those without military contributions cannot be appointed officials. If not for their advocating of military strength, our country would have been long gone.”

Everyone voiced their agreement.

The King of Zhao looked at them with pride, and his gaze settled on Lian Jin, and said happily, “I did not expect that such a tiny state of Wei, would actually produce an invincible swordsman.”

Lian Jin hurriedly went to his table, knelt down and bowed his head, “There is only Great Zhao in my heart now. As long as your Majesty gives a command, I am willing to lay down my life without a word.”

Master Wu secretly gave a cold snort, obviously he despised him because he defected to Zhao Mu’s side.

Maybe the King of Zhao has been influenced by Zhao Mu, his attitude towards him changed greatly and he said joyfully, “We must use the talented, as long as you’re loyal to me, I will certainly treat you well.”

Lian Jin as ecstatic and hurriedly voiced out his promise.

The King of Zhao raised his voice to ask, “Where is Xiang Shaolong?”

Xiang Shaolong gave a slight smile and answered as he

walked out and knelt opposite Lian Jin. He greeted loudly, "Xiang Shaolong pays respect to my King."

The King of Zhao's eyes brightened, and said, "You single handedly defeated 800 horse thieves with your wits, and you're loyal and brave. For your comrade's sake, you risked your life to stay behind and fight the enemy. This act has brought up the fame of Great Zhao, I am very impressed with you."

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly voiced his gratitude and modesty, but in his heart he was secretly laughing that the story is getting more and more exaggerated.

The King of Zhao smiled with satisfaction, "The two of you are the dragons among men. I want you to come into the Palace for a duel, because I want you to become our country's role model, and spread the spirit of martial arts so that they will have the ability to kill our enemies to repay the country."

The two of them agreed unanimously.

The King of Zhao laughed loudly and said, "I, as well as my officials, are all impatient to watch your display of legendary swordplay. But you must remember that this is just an exchange of pointers, you must not endanger each other. I will appoint the winner as imperial swordsman immediately, and he will be able to lead an army into battle."

Zhao Mu raised his voice, "Your Majesty, I have a suggestion."

The King of Zhao replied in surprise, "Marquis Ju Lu, please speak."

Zhao Mu stood up and said respectfully, "If your Majesty decrees that they cannot endanger each other in this duel, they will certainly not dare to go against your orders and will control themselves in the duel. That way, it'll be difficult for them to fully show off their sword skill, would your Majesty please reconsider."

On hearing this, Lady Ya's body trembled. She stood up and fluttered, "Knives and swords are emotionless, if a life is lost; won't it turn a joyous affair into a sad one."

The King of Zhao looked at Lady Ya in bafflement and said, "Imperial Sister, Official Zhao please take a seat, I know what to do."

Zhao Mu stared coldly at her before returning to his seat. He was feeling secretly overjoyed, because Zhao Ya's reaction tells him that Xiang Shaolong was really drugged, and she is clearer about that more than anyone else.

By now everyone in the hall knows that there is something wrong with Xiang Shaolong.

The King of Zhao looked at Master Wu and asked nonchalantly, "Does Master Wu have any thoughts about this?"

Master Wu secretly thought to himself, if Xiang Shaolong lost because of women, he can only blame himself and he'll be better off dead. But if he can kill Lian Jin, he'll be able to

help appease this anger he felt, and he nodded in agreement, "Shaolong once told me, he only knows how to kill, and is not well versed in performing swordplay at all. So if you want to see his real skills, we should not limit him at all."

By saying that, he's obviously means that this is going to be a duel to the death.

Lady Ya's body trembled, and finally wept over her own stupidity. Xiang Shaolong saw this, and his despise for her lessened a little.

Everyone in the hall became excited and were talking amongst themselves eagerly.

"Dang!"

It was the sound of the cup shattering, and the atmosphere was immediately serious.

After the King of Zhao threw the cup onto the ground, he said coldly, "To kill the enemy, is to use your life as a stake. The way of battles, is the way of life and death. Fine! I will not impose any restrictions, the winner will be my imperial swordsman."

Xiang Shaolong and Lian Jin who were in front of the dragon throne agreed at the same time.

The King of Zhao cried out, "The duel begins."

The hall was deathly quiet, silently waiting for a good show to start.

Lady Ya fell into the arms of her sister Lady An, who was next to her, unable to witness the horrific scene where Xiang Shaolong will be killed.

Wu Tingfang's face turned pale and she leaned towards her father and asked, "He won't lose, right!"

"Clang!"

Lian Jin pulled out his famed Golden Ray sword and stood steadily in the middle of the hall and took a bow, a smile seemingly on his face.

Xiang Shaolong stood up, took off his robe with one hand and threw it aside, revealing the warrior's clothes specially designed for him by Shu'er and the four maids. The clothes made him look even more broad and heroic.

Everyone felt that Lian Jin was good looking and heroic, but on comparison, Xiang Shaolong had a little more upright and valiant air about him, making the men sigh in compliment and the women lose their hearts.

When Xiang Shaolong drew his wooden sword, everyone gasped in surprise.

He stood next to Lian Jin and bowed with the sword.

The King of Zhao asked surprisingly, "Shaolong is using the wooden sword to duel, aren't you afraid of being at a disadvantage?"

Xiang Shaolong smiled a little and replied suavely, "Your Majesty, do not worry. This wooden sword is made specially

for me, it's not afraid of any swords or sharp weapons."

Lian Jin was secretly sniggering to himself, let's see how capable this empty shell can be now.

Lady Ya can't help but raise her head and took a peep at him. Looking at him standing so heroically, she felt even more guilty and collapsed into Lady An's arms again, unable to bear taking another look.

If one must find someone who is in most pain there, she must be the one.

Before Xiang Shaolong, Zhao Mu is the one who controls her heart, and ever since Zhao Kuo died in the battle of Changping, Zhao Mu took the opportunity and conquered her.

Initially Zhao Mu was very taken with her mesmerizing body, but in less than a year his attention was taken by pretty men and women from other countries. These few years he treated her hot and cold, so due to loneliness and revenge, she began a wanton life hunting for men. Only when she met Xiang Shaolong, did she manage to slowly replace Zhao Mu.

This time she was tried by Zhao Mu to deal with Xiang Shaolong, on one hand because she's afraid of his control, afraid that he will harm Xiang Shaolong and spoil their good times together. But more importantly, subconsciously she is used to obeying his orders, which resulted in her silly decision and causing her much hate and regret.

After Zhao Mu snatched her from Xiang Shaolong's hand

yesterday morning, he used all his ways, drugs and skilled ministrations, combined with threats and benefits. After having fun with her for more than half a day, he finally succeeded in getting her to proceed with his devious plan.

The deal is he will not hurt Xiang Shaolong, and after the duel he will help her and Xiang Shaolong get together and will never harass her again.

Now of course she has realized that Zhao Mu had lied to her.

Right at this nerve breaking point, Zhao Mu laughed and said, "Since ancient times heroes have been matched with beauties. To increase the excitement, and to make everyone in our country understand your Majesty's ideals in developing martial arts, I have another suggestion."

The King of Zhao really treats this 'lover' of his differently, and said, "Marquis Ju Lu's suggestions have always been very good, say it quickly!"

Zhao Mu's sharp eyes swept past the whole hall and said slowly, "I suggest that the winner of the duel today, will be able to choose any one of the beauties in this hall as his wife. In this way he gets both beauty and official appointment, won't it be the best thing in the world. I ask that your Majesty approve.

Everyone made a ruckus.

Xiang Shaolong can't help but secretly praise Zhao Mu for his plans. He could see through his devious plot. Obviously, if Lian Jin defeats him, he will be able to take Wu Tingfang for

himself, and by then he can offer her to Zhao Mu. Zhao Mu would then get what he wants.

Master Wu's expression immediately changed. He can tell what the other's nefarious plan is, but is in a difficult position to voice opposition. Because that would imply that the winner will certainly choose his granddaughter, and indirectly mean that Wu Tingfang is the prettiest among all, the other beauties are all not qualified.

The King of Zhao was a little stunned on hearing this, and thought of Wu Tingfang. He secretly felt that if he did not convey this order, it would tell everyone here that he is afraid of Master Wu. He was silent for a moment before raising his head heavenward and laughed, "The sword will win the beauty. This way, the palace duel tonight will be the talk for centuries to come. I will follow Marquis Ju Lu's suggestion, the winner will be able to choose from here any lady without a betrothal to become his wife."

Once he has spoken, this became a set deal.

Everyone's attention returned to Xiang Shaolong and Lian Jin.

Lian Jin could not conceal the look of happiness on his face. He and Zhao Mu made a secret agreement that Zhao Mu will have Wu Tingfang for the first three days, and in future this beauty will belong to him. It may not be perfect, but it's a lot better than not being able to have her at all.

Xiang Shaolong on the other hand is so calm that it borders on emotionless, having entered into the realm of calmness

of the Mozi swordplay.

“Dang!”

The duel began.

Lian Jin turned towards Xiang Shaolong and struck a pose, both his feet steady on the ground, as if he's atop a horse, his upper body leaning a little back. Under the firelight, his dazzling Golden Ray sword pointing at Xiang Shaolong, who is 20 steps away from him. He held the pommel of the sword tightly in front of his chest, making one feel his immense strength waiting to be unleashed.

Xiang Shaolong's eyes were lowered to the ground, his wooden sword touching the ground, like an old monk meditating. He was facing the King of Zhao, with Lian Jin at his side.

Although the two of them have not started the fight, but everyone can strongly feel the opposing calmness and movement, the atmosphere so tense that it makes breathing difficult.

Lian Jin has no idea that this calmness is the essence of the Mozi swordplay and thought that his opponent is afraid because he is weak. He laughed loudly, “Is Brother Xiang frightened!”

Lady Ya sat up straight and looked at the plaza, a dagger hidden in her sleeves. She cried out in her heart, “Xiang Lang, do not be afraid, Zhao Ya will accompany you.”

Once the crowd heard Lian Jin say that, they all felt that

Shaolong was afraid and talked amongst themselves busily. The King of Zhao and Master Wu looked unhappy while Zhao Mu laughed icily.

This does not mean that their eyes are not bright enough. It's just that the essence of Mozi swordplay which places more emphasis on defense rather than attack, is really vastly different from the other schools of swordplay and ideals during that era. When two enemies face each other, who would not use all their might to attack, hoping to strike a fatal move.

The corners of Xiang Shaolong's mouth curved up into a slight smile and he said nonchalantly, "Top grade martial arts is not something that Brother Lian can understand, strike now! Don't let others misunderstand that Brother Lian is only someone who can talk."

Lian Jin was so furious that his eyes shot out a murderous, icy stare. He straightened his back, using the strength to propel his hand forward, the golden ray from the sword shot forward, aiming at his opponent's shoulder, his aim accurate and vicious.

Zhao Mu and Prince Shaoyuan's tables erupted in thunderous cheers.

Xiang Shaolong was calm, not at all affected by the cheers of his opponent's supporters.

He knows that once he strikes, it'll be difficult for him to pretend to be tired and weak, then he'll certainly be defeated by Lian Jin whose sword skills is as good as his. But

he can lure Lian Jin in using strategies.

Lian Jin will take advantage of the fact that he's weak, so he will certainly use all his might to attack once he moves. Besides, Lian Jin has deep hatred for him, and wants to further weaken him, so he will surely not give any leeway in his attack. He will use all his strength in all his moves, and in that way, he will fall into his trap.

Comparing their stamina, how can Lian Jin be better than him who has gone through the strictest stamina training.

So when Lian Jin thinks that he is exhausting his energy, the truth is contrary, it is Lian Jin himself who will be exhausting his own energy.

Besides, his advantage is that his wooden sword is three to four times heavier, so if Lian Jin wants to fight head on, he'll be at a disadvantage.

The sword's ray has reached him, aiming towards his left rib.

Without a word, Xiang Shaolong took a diagonal step back towards the right, the heavy wooden sword left the ground and came up diagonally, and struck right at the tip of the Golden Ray sword, which is exactly the weakest point of his opponent's sword.

The Golden Ray sword could not withstand this and was immediately bounced away.

This time it is the rest of the people who cheered, the loudest of course being those from the Wu family. Wu Ting Fang's palms were almost swollen from the clapping.

Even Lian Jin did not expect his opponent's swordplay would be better than when they fought the last time, and was afraid he'll take the opportunity to press on an attack. He lifted his sword back into the defend position, and was about to strike again when his opponent turned to face him, his heavy wooden sword retracted a little, as if he's getting ready to attack. He was so shocked that he took a step back.

Right at this time, the sword Xiang Shaolong was holding lightly trembled, and dropped a little, revealing a superficial loophole.

Lian Jin was ecstatic, thinking to himself that this lad is already showing fatigue at the second strike, so he hesitated no further. With a 'swoosh', he lifted his sword for a direct slash, as if he wanted to slash his opponent's wooden sword. When his shoulder is almost parallel, his body dashed forward, his wrist flicked and the slash changed into a stab, aiming right at his opponent's face. At the same time he gave a flying kick towards his opponent's wooden sword, the moves aimed at killing his enemy with one stroke.

His movements were fluid like a swimming dragon, forming a coherent whole with a murderous intent. Everyone was dumbfounded and started getting worried for Xiang Shaolong.

Lady Ya secretly exclaimed to herself 'forget it', and while those people next to her were concentrating fully on the duel, she pressed the dagger against her belly.

Xiang Shaolong looked icily at the Golden Ray sword that

was coming to him like a poisonous dragon and moved swiftly to the side. With a backhand move of his wooden sword, it hit square and hard on the Golden Ray sword.

“Clang” and the Golden Ray sword was propelled away again.

The crowd was intoxicated and cheered loudly.

Although Lian Jin’s wrist was numb from the impact, but because Xiang Shaolong used only 50% of his strength, Lian Jin thought that he is just using his remaining strength, coupled with the excellent swordplay and the heavy weight of the wooden sword to block his Golden Ray sword. He laughed loud and long, and struck 10 times, each attack aimed to force the opponent into fighting head on with him.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly laughing, his opponent is giving up the intricacies of the swordplay, and his using his disadvantage to attack to his advantage. Therefore he retreated as he fought, with no loopholes in his defense at all. Either slashing or stabbing, he’d always managed to neutralize Lian Jin’s vigorous attacks at the last moment.

On the surface, Lian Jin has gained the upper hand, forcing Xiang Shaolong to keep on retreating without a chance to retaliate at all. But only Lian Jin will know the difficulty, although his opponent seems to be in a dangerous position, but he can never seem to fully break past his last defense.

Why is it that after last night’s depletion of his energy, he is still so formidable.

The crowd has never seen such startling swordplay and were cheering madly.

The King of Zhao was excited as well and kept on clapping and cheering.

Zhao Mu had thought that Lian Jin could have a swift victory, and now he was furrowing his brows. He took a glance at Lady Ya and saw her piteous look, which put his mind at ease a little.

Prince Shaoyuan shouted the most fiercely, he wished that Lian Jin would cut off Xiang Shaolong's head with one slash.

Xiang Shaolong took another three steps back and laughed loudly before standing steady. The heavy wooden sword slashed across with all his might, but just before it hit against the Golden Ray sword, the stance changed twice, forcing the now tired Lian Jin to change his moves twice before he can block the heavy wooden sword.

"Dang!" The sound this time actually sounded like the crisp clanging of two metal swords hitting against one another.

Lian Jin was stunned and realized that his opponent's strength has increased by at least half and although he did not want to, he can't help but take two steps back, changing his attack into defense. His relentless attacks finally came to an end.

Xiang Shaolong stared at him, electricity shooting out from his eyes, and he seems to be a totally changed person. He straightened his back, revealing a heroic air and said icily,

“You’ve been tricked!”

He took half a step forward, roared and raised his sword to slash at his opponent’s face. The wind carried his roar, piercing to the ears, and even more astonishing, this slash seems to carry with it the fatality of a thousand soldiers and horses charging into the battlefield.

The endless cheers and roars came to an abrupt stop.

This change is too unexpected.

Many stood up unconsciously, and Zhao Mu is one of them.

Lady Ya stood up with a surprised ‘Ah’, the dagger in her hand dropped to the ground, a look of happiness as she gazed at her godly and heroic lover.

When Lian Jin heard his opponent said “You’ve been tricked”, he was so frightened his senses took leave of him. But he is after all a skilled pugilist, and used all his capability and strength to forcefully meet with this unavoidable attack.

Lian Jin’s stamina was not as good as Xiang Shaolong’s in the first place, and coupled with the fact that he’s fought for a long time and losing strength. His opponent’s wooden sword was almost a hundred catties, so Xiang Shaolong’s attack forced him to retreat three steps back.

A thunderous applause erupted from the crowd at this time.

There was no expression in Xiang Shaolong’s eyes at all, he was as calm as still water. The heavy wooden sword on his shoulder, he walked towards Lian Jin step by step. The ‘pak

pak' sound made by his footsteps, became the symphony of death.

His formidable imposing manner pressed further, not allowing Lian Jin any time to catch his breath at all.

Lian Jin knows that he must not let his opponent take control of the situation, so he roared and the Golden Ray sword became a shining blur, turning from a wide attacking stance back into the more intricate swordplay he is more adept at.

Xiang Shaolong's heavy wooden sword sprung up from his shoulder and was in midair as he said icily, "It's too late!"

The heavy wooden sword increased its speed. It looked like a clumsy move but in fact it was an intricate one, slashing heavily right in the middle of the shining, blurred sword.

The blur of the sword stopped, Lian Jin took a few steps back, fresh blood oozing from the corner of his mouth.

Xiang Shaolong knows that if he wants revenge, this is the time. He quietly called out Shu'er and Su Nu's names in his heart and charged forward, knocking into Lian Jin together with his sword.

The two bodies joined together and separated again.

Everything was quiet, it was as if time has been frozen at that instant.

The whole hall was so quiet that one can hear a pin drop. Besides Zhao Mu and a few other highly skilled pugilists with

excellent eyesight, the rest can't really see clearly what has happened.

The two of them exchanged positions, then separated by one step, and stood back to back.

Xiang Shaolong raised his head upwards, the wooden sword back on his shoulder, his eyes filled with endless sadness and anger.

Lian Jin looked totally dumbfounded and lowered his head to look at his chest where the sword struck. He felt the broken ribs and the gradually spreading heart wrecking pain.

Everyone was flabbergasted, looking at the two quietly standing person in the hall.

Lian Jin groaned, and he knelt down.

Xiang Shaolong looked heavenward and laughed loud and long. He knelt down towards the King of Zhao, the tip of his sword on the ground and said respectfully, "It's my good fortune that I have not lost my life, and I would like to marry the young lady of the Wu family, Tingfang as my wife."

His words were deliberately spoken for Lian Jin's ears.

On hearing this, Lian Jin felt a rush of anger attacking his heart, spurted out a mouthful of fresh blood and collapsed on the ground. His stance was like he was kow-towing in prayer, and died on the spot.

Zhao Mu lost everything in this bet and was so furious his face turned pale. His fists clenched tightly, he looked at Lady

Ya with hatred.

Lady Ya's pretty face revealed an alluring exhilaration, her dainty body trembling. She had just turned her head back and took a look at him, the corners of her mouth revealing a disdainful expression.

Zhao Mu suddenly knows that Lady Ya is now fully out of his control.

Everyone in the Wu family was excited.

Wu Tingfang's hands clasped her pretty face, tears of love rolling down her cheeks uncontrollably. Heavens! She will be his little wife.

The rest of the people in the hall have not recollected their emotions after witnessing the engaging duel earlier and were still looking on speechlessly. The only sound they can hear is the remaining echoes of Xiang Shaolong's words.

The King of Zhao personally poured a cup of wine and left his seat to walk towards Xiang Shaolong and said with a sigh, "Such swordsmanship has truly never been seen before. From today onwards, not only will Shaolong be Wu Tingfang's husband, but you'll also be Great Zhao's Chief Imperial Officer. I will bestow you a cup of excellent wine."

Xiang Shaolong put his wooden sword down and after kowtowing and thanking his Majesty, he received the wine while still kneeling and drank it in one gulp.

Thunderous cheers erupted.

No one is interested to throw even a glance at Lian Jin's body.

CHAPTER 4
Regaining What Was Lost
[Translated by JEAN]

THAT night the Wu's castle was decorated festively, everyone was in a celebratory mood, making merry with songs and dances.

The only dejected person is Wu Hei. After Master Wu gave him a thorough scolding, he chased him out of the house. All his men will be transferred to Tao Fang who gained great merit by recommending Xiang Shaolong.

In the mansion, Master Wu's wife and his favored concubines, 17 sons and their families all attended the

celebratory feast. On top of that there were his 20 odd daughters and their husband's families, together with other relatives, there were over a thousand people gathered in the hall, the atmosphere festive.

The ecstatic Wu Tingfang dragged her husband and after seeing her Mother, she dragged and introduced him to relatives and friends, causing Xiang Shaolong much confusion and headache. Like what Tao Fang said, besides Wu Yingyuan, the rest are unable to account to much accomplishment, only interested in merry-making.

Amidst the talking and laughter, Tao Fang came over to call him aside. They came to a small study at the back courtyard. Master Wu and Wu Yingyuan are already waiting there.

The four of them sat down on the mat facing one another.

Master Wu clapped his shoulder and said, "Yingyuan told me what happened. Shaolong, not only are your sword skill unparalleled, but you're wittier than others, or else the situation now will be totally opposite."

Xiang Shaolong heard that his tone is warm, apparently he is already regarding him as his grandson-in-law, so he hurriedly expressed his gratitude.

A fog came over Master Wu's expression and he said somberly, "Yingyuan told me that you have the blood of Qin in you. If it was in the past, I will certainly be very unhappy, but today I feel exceptionally close to you."

He continued emotionally, "No matter how much effort I

have put in for Zhao, the Zhaos will still treat me with suspicion. What happened to Lian Jin this time is proof of that."

He took a glance at everyone and sighed, "To think that years ago before Wei's Shang Yang went to Qin, the Qins have not discarded vulgarity. Fathers, sons, brothers and aunts, daughters all slept in the same room. It's all due to Shang Yang's reforms that made Qin leap into one of the strongest states. But look how a foreigner like him ended up. Once King Xiao passed away, his successor immediately had him killed by having five oxes dismember his body. Hai! Now I am starting to believe what Yingyuan has said, sooner or later we will face the same fate."

Tao Fang added, "Luckily Shaolong is now up and coming, and can dispel this disadvantageous position of ours for the time being."

Wu Yingyuan replied, "I'm afraid Zhao Mu will come up with another plan now that this one has failed. He will surely find a way to harm Shaolong, and we must not let our guards down against Prince Shaoyuan as well."

Master Wu gave a cold snort, "What they want is the Wu family's riches and women. Humph! I am not one who will offer my neck to be chopped. Now that the Zhaos have revealed that they are going to deal with me, and with that Guo Zhong at the side fanning the fire, we must now plan for a rainy day so that we will not be caught off guard when the time comes."

Wu Yingyuan replied, "Father do not worry! With Shaolong, it's like adding a tiger to our strength, the Zhaos will not dare to make any hasty moves. Besides for the past 10 years, I have always used the advantage of being able to travel outside to plan for our future. Now that I have some headway, I will be able to present to you the whole plan very soon for your consideration."

After Master Wu complimented his son, he turned towards Shaolong and said, "Today is your big day, we'll find a good date within these few days and let you and Fang'er marry immediately. You can put your mind at ease and relax and enjoy yourself, the other matters can be put aside first."

He added with a smile, "Now Tao Fang will take you to see someone; that is the reward you deserve."

Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic and hurriedly thanked him.

Tao Fang walked with him towards the courtyard behind the castle and said emotionally, "If I have not met you, the one being chased away today would not have been Wu Hei, but me, Tao Fang."

Xiang Shaolong replied, "Is Master Tao really a Zhao, why would the Wu father and son trust you so much?"

Tao Fang replied, "Actually I'm not really sure who I am as well. If not for the previous generation's master who took me in, I'm afraid I would have starved to death on the streets. Therefore even if I have to lay down my life for the Wu family, I will not have a word of complaint."

Xiang Shaolong was astounded.

By now the two of them has reached a bungalow built with its back to the hills, and they could see lights inside.

Tao Fang said, "From tonight onwards, this house would be your home. After Grand Young Miss become yours, she will move here as well."

Xiang Shaolong saw that this house is surrounded by woods, and is very happy with it.

Tao Fang pushed him towards the front courtyard and laughed, "Enjoy yourself! But if Grand Young Miss comes looking for you, even Master would not be able to hold her back."

He left after saying these words.

Xiang Shaolong stepped on the gravel and he has not even reached the main door when Chunying, Xiaying, Qiuying and Dongying, the four pretty maids came out together and knelt at the two sides, saying together, "We pay our respects to Master."

Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic and he reached out his hands and pinched each of their faces, but suddenly he thought of the ill-fated Shu'er and Su Nu.

Now that Lian Jin has died under his sword, only that Prince Shaoyuan and Zhao Mu remains.

The four maids were understanding, and on seeing his distraught expression, they wept together with him as well.

Xiang Shaolong forced himself to look happy and cajoled the four maids. Once he stepped into the house, he saw that the decorations were exquisite, warm and comfortable.

Xiaying is the most petite among them, about 16 to 17 years old, and she's the prettiest as well. She came up to him and whispered in his ear, "There's someone waiting for Master in the room."

Xiang Shaolong felt heat rising up his heart, reached out his hand and grabbed her bosom before walking towards the room.

He had just pushed the door open when a fiery ball ran into his arms, the dainty body trembling, with tears of joy flowing down. Who else can it be but the long gone Ting Fangshi.

The old flame of desire started burning high.

Words were replaced but hot and wet kisses. This couple who had missed each other for so long caressed each other madly, removing the obstacles of clothing who has no place being there for each other.

Under the light of the burning lamp, they used the most vigorous movements to express the love they felt for each other, joined together as one in the most intimate way possible between a man and a woman.

In this moment, every inch of their skin belongs to the other, there is no holding back at all.

The sexy and alluring Ting Fangshi totally opened up her beautiful body, accepting her lover's most violent and

intoxicating attacks.

The joy took her soul to the peak of happiness, her soul was besotted. She screamed madly, using her body and mind to make this man, who has caused her endless tears for the last six months, happy.

She has now received her reward.

While at the peak of her joy, this mature and voluptuous beauty's convulsed, and uncontrollably twined herself around Xiang Shaolong's perfect male body like an octopus, using all the strength in her limbs to hold on to him tightly.

Xiang Shaolong lied comfortably on her body, licking the tears on her face and asked, "Where have you been all these time?"

With her face still blushing, Ting Fangshi panted, "Right here, but not in this pretty house."

Xiang Shaolong asked in surprise, "Didn't Tao Fang said you've been given away?"

As long as Ting Fangshi can hug him, she can forget about what happened in the past. She said, "Do not blame Master Tao, he has been protecting me all along. Ever since we thought the horse thieves killed you, Master made me into a dance courtesan. But because of Master Tao, I've always received special treatment and I do not have to accompany guests. Then you came back alive, and even defeated the bad person, I was so excited I could die."

Xiang Shaolong laughed, "This I know too well."

Ting Fangshi wriggled coquettishly.

Xiang Shaolong felt his desire burning again, and was about to launch another attack when Qiuying's voice could be heard calling from outside, "Master! Grand Young Miss is here."

Xiang Shaolong kissed Ting Fangshi and said, "Have some sleep first, I'll be right back."

Ting Fangshi nodded her head like a little lamb. Xiang Shaolong can't help but grope her a little more before walking out of the room satisfied, and bumped right into Wu Tingfang who was walking over.

Wu Tingfang hugged him and stretched her head to look into the naked splendor in the room and laughed, "Have you just done your naughty deed?"

Xiang Shaolong laughed, "That's right! But it's not the end yet."

He bent over and carried her up and went back into the room.

Ting Fangshi was so startled she hurriedly knelt down and paid her respects.

Wu Tingfang's slender hands twined around Xiang Shaolong's neck and she looked at the naked Ting Fangshi and half sighed, "Dispense with courtesy. Our husband is the rudest person in this world, so we can forget about any semblance of courtesy."

It was followed by joyous mating, endless loving.

The next day, before the sun rose, Tao Fang came and woke him up to go to the Palace immediately to see the King of Zhao and accept his new appointment.

Although Wu Tingfang and Ting Fangshi woke up with him, but after last night, their bodies doesn't seem to obey their wishes and they couldn't get out of bed.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly cursing that even in this era with no alarm clocks, he still has to suffer the pain of waking up early. The four maids hurriedly helped him freshen up and change before he went on his way with Tao Fang.

Ever since they reached Handan, this is the first time he woke up so early. It turns out that there's a lot of people who wakes up even earlier than them. Besides the farmers and herdsmen heading towards the market, they also saw troops of Zhao soldiers on their morning exercise, walking briskly and neatly past them as they shouted commands. All these activities added some excitement to this morning city.

Tao Fang rode in with him, his eyes tired and said, "I had a little too much to drink last night, and had some fun with two dance courtesans. I'm still having a bit of a headache now. I have to admit old age even if I didn't want to, in the past I can have seven girls in a row and I won't feel anything."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed hoarsely, "Seven?"

And thought to himself that either his memory is failing him,

or he's boasting. He only had two girls last night and now his back still feels a little stiff. If it's seven women, he might even have problem getting up the horse now.

When men talks about such matters, none will want to belittle themselves. Tao Fang said quietly, "If you don't believe me you can ask Eldest Young Master, he was in the room next to mine that night and said that he could hear their moans all night. Hai! If only there's a pill to return one to one's youth."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought, do I really have to ask my Father-in-law, is it true that on a certain date on a certain night, Master Tao was in a room next to you doing it with seven women and making them scream the whole night? He can't help but smile at this thought.

By now the two of them has passed through Lady Ya's enormous residence and turned into the main road in Handan, going towards the Palace. The sky is slowly getting brighter.

Tao Fang saw Lady Ya's residence and said, "I thought Zhao Ya would come and look for you last night, but I didn't expect my guess to be wrong."

Xiang Shaolong also felt a little lost. Because he thought as well that Zhao Ya will not let him off last night, then he will be able to humiliate her so as to appease his anger at her for obeying Zhao Mu. But things did not happen to his expectations and now he is past his anger. He thought of how she opposed without concern about herself Zhao Mu's

suggestion last night about having no restrictions in the duel. Obviously she loves him more than Zhao Mu, and he can't help but miss her a little.

When they went past the city gates, all the guards saluted Xiang Shaolong, making him feel what his status is like now, and at the same time he thought that if he has to start work so early everyday in future, he would have to give up all merry-making at night.

When the two of them came to the plaza outside Chaoyang Hall where the King of Zhao meets his officials, they saw the steps outside the hall was filled with officials and generals in their official robes, chatting amongst themselves in small groups. The atmosphere was serious with an underlying ease.

Zhao Mu was talking to a few generals when he saw the two of them walking over. After greeting one another, Zhao Mu looked as if nothing has happened and said warmly, "Master Tao, please return. You can hand Shaolong over to me, I will settle everything for him."

After Tao Fang cast a look at Xiang Shaolong, he left helplessly.

Xiang Shaolong wished that he could cut him up into pieces immediately, but he has to pretend to smile and look respectful.

Zhao Mu said with a smile, "It's the first time Shaolong is reporting here, you're surely not used to the rules in the Palace. But now that you're one of us, I will look after you."

Xiang Shaolong secretly cursed him for being a wily old fox. He placed his bet on the wrong person earlier so now he's trying to get into his good books. He has no choice but to pretend and reply gratefully, "Thank you Marquis for thinking so highly of me, I am indeed very grateful to you. If not for Marquis' suggestion, how else will the Wu family agree to marry their daughter to me."

Although it felt as if an arrow was struck through his heart, Zhao Mu doesn't know that in fact Xiang Shaolong has heard about his evil intentions towards Wu Tingfang in the carriage that night. He thought that he was genuinely grateful and hurriedly replied, "You're welcome."

By then the bell was sounded and the officials hurriedly walked into the hall.

Zhao Mu asked warmly, "Does Shaolong has anything special on tonight?"

Xiang Shaolong secretly sighed to himself, knowing that there's no way he can reject, but also because of the strategy he had discussed with the Wu family last night, he can only reply, "Marquis please give your instructions, I can cast everything else aside."

Zhao Mu was very satisfied, thinking to himself, you threw your lot with the Wu Family with the intention of only getting power and beauty. As long as I devise a ploy and let you know who the real master is, you'll come and work for me obediently. He laughed and said, "I'll send someone at dusk to Wu's residence to escort you to my residence for

dinner. You don't have to be dressed formally, just take it that you're just going home."

Amidst the loud laughter, he accompanied Xiang Shaolong into the hall.

This Zhao Mu is a strong handed and ambitious man, so he has the intention of pulling a rare talent mAnlike Xiang Shaolong to his side. He also wants to cast a blow to the Wu family, so he put aside his private grudges for the time being and changed to soft tactics to deal with Xiang Shaolong. But he did not expect Xiang Shaolong will be one who place relationships and loyalty above everything else.

Shu'er's death has made the enmity between them unbreakable, only blood will be able to wash it clean.

The officials in the hall took their places on the left and right rows according to their status. Xiang Shaolong stood outside at the door of the hall, until the King of Zhao took his seat on the imperial throne and settled a few court affairs before he broke tradition and summoned him to court to officially appoint him. Only then did he order the internal official to bring him to the imperial palace's uniform department to take his measurements for his official robes and for professionals to teach him about his duties and court etiquette.

That internal official is called Ji Guang, and panders to him extremely, taking the effort to explain everything in detail. Only now did Xiang Shaolong realize that the imperial guard is one of the 10 assistants under the command of the

Brocade Commander, their only duty is to ensure his Majesty's safety. They have to be on duty in the Palace for five days every month, sticking close to the King to protect him. He was secretly lamenting that in the past he was frequently tasked with protecting politically important people, and now that he's in this world 2000 years earlier, he's still doing the same job.

The short and fat Ji Guang smiled and said, "You don't know how much his Majesty likes you. He gave you three days' leave, by then your official robes will be ready. You'll surely look suave in your army uniform, no one will look better than you."

Xiang Shaolong looked at his flat and round face that looks so funny and said, "Can I leave now?"

A look of alarm flashed past Ji Guang's face, and he said with a smile, "There's still one more place to go, please come with me."

They turned this way and that in the Palace, passing through corridors and gardens, and in the end reached an exquisite little house in the back palace. He said mysteriously, "Please go in, I will wait here."

Xiang Shaolong was baffled, but looking at his expression, he knows that there's no use asking him, so he might as well walked towards that building.

He had just stepped into the hall when a beauty who was standing next to the window turned around. It is Lady Ya, whom he was just thinking of this morning.

She has totally recovered her glowing appearance and poise, dressed all in white, proud and confident. She came towards him smiling, her rosy lips muttering quietly, "Xiang Shaolong! Xiang Shaolong!"

Xiang Shaolong saw her smiling so prettily, and was unable to utter even a word of reprimand. He can only walk past her coldly, going towards where she stood earlier, looking at the woods outside the window with a small stream with a bridge over it. The scenery was enchanting.

Lady Ya swayed her way next to him and said gently, "Xiang Shaolong! Shall we make a deal?"

This strange move threw Xiang Shaolong off guard, and he looked at her in shock.

Lady Ya covered her mouth and laughed. She lowered her head and said slowly, "Firstly, Zhao Ya seeks your forgiveness for falling into that villain Zhao Mu's plot and almost caused harm to you. And also caused harm to myself."

Xiang Shaolong knows that she must have thought back about the matter and knows that he did not take that aphrodisiac, so she told him the truth first to show that she dare not hide anything from him.

Lady Ya lifted her head, her rosy lips saying quietly, "Zhao Ya wants to thank you as well. If you have not appeared, I may never be able to leave Zhao Mu's control, but ever since last night, the thought of him makes me sick. From now on, I will not allow him to touch even a finger of mine."

She added, "And I won't let any man touch me. Of course, the only exception is Xiang Shaolong, he can touch any way he wants."

Xiang Shaolong felt a lurch in his heart and almost pulled this woman whose beauty is comparable to Wu Tingfang's into his arms and let his hands enjoy themselves. However he gritted his teeth and held himself back, saying calmly, "Lady has not disclosed the terms of your deal."

The sunlight and the shadow from the trees fell on her snow-white clothes from outside the window, which made her look as if she is wearing a robe of crisp morning ray. Her heaving bosom, her delicate and well defined shoulders, her tiny waist, her long and beautiful legs, she is so alluring that Xiang Shaolong is unable to put her together with the word 'slut'. But she was once a slut. Such strange oxymoron, made her especially enchanting.

Naturally Lady Ya knows this point, so she's quite confident that Xiang Shaolong will accept her surrender. He raised her dainty brows slightly and said quietly, "I know you're deliberately trying to scare me. In actual fact you're no longer angry with me, but just pretending to."

Xiang Shaolong couldn't do anything to her so he sighed, reached out his hand to grab her waist and pull her in. His face two inches away from hers, he asked, "You really will not touch any other men in future?"

Lady Ya threw a glance at him, "of course it's true, if you don't believe me you can take my heart out for a look!"

Xiang Shaolong is flirtatious by nature, the more wanton the woman, the more exciting it is for him. Therefore how can he ever resist the temptress Lady Ya's attacks. He sighed and said, "Although I had a crazy night with Wu Tingfang last night, but you've still managed to set me aflame, and I only wish to see the most exciting part of your deal."

Lady Ya smiled coquettishly, "That part belongs to you long ago. Now Zhao Ya is only asking that you accept it from the kindness of your heart. What I am giving is Lady Ya's effective ears, to be your spy and scout."

Xiang Shaolong was astounded, "Are you trying to hint to me that I will be in great danger?"

Lady Ya used all her strength to hug him, gave him a short, gentle kiss and sighed, "How can one mountain contain two tigers, this is such a simple logic. One day you will ultimately clash face to face with Zhao Mu. With such a useful soldier like Zhao Ya around, how can Shaolong not accept it with a smile."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed hoarsely, "So once Zhao Ya escapes from Zhao Mu's grasp, she can become so formidable. I shall decide to make do with it and accept this main deal of yours."

Lady Ya was ecstatic, "Remember, it's main and not side, once we leave Handan I want to become one of your main wives."

Xiang Shaolong asked in surprise, "Leave Handan?"

Lady Ya left him, looked out the window sadly and nodded her head, "That is the only way out for us, or else in less than a year, you and everyone in the Wu family will die."

Xiang Shaolong was shaken and grabbed her shoulders, pulling her close into his arms and asked gently, "Zhao Ya can you be more precise about this?"

He was finally moved by Zhao Ya, because she would even betray the Kingdom of Zhao and her family for him, her love for him is boundless. So he changed his way of addressing her as well.

Lady Ya spoke with love, "As long as you will love me for the rest of your live, Ya'er will listen to anything you say."

Xiang Shaolong looked at her heaving bosom as she spoke, and knows that her heart is now burning with desire. He sighed and said, "Ya'er's bosom looks so beautiful when you're breathing."

Once Lady Ya heard her lover complimenting her in her chest, she turned around happily, "Continue with your compliments! Ya'er loves being pampered by Xiang Lang."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly thinking that she's formidable, and really wanted to have fun with her immediately, but this is definitely not the right place. He pulled her and ask, "Your place or mine?"

Lady Ya hugged him tightly and sighed, "Hai! Ya'er wants it even more than you! But important matters are at hand, you and the Wu family are in a life and death situation."

It was as if cold water was poured over his head, Xiang Shaolong's desire evaporated completely and he looked at her seriously.

Lady Ya fell into his arms and whispered into his ears, "When Zhao Mu took me back to his residence yesterday to have fun with, I took the chance while he was sleeping to steal a look at his secret documents which he kept locked up. I found a name list, and they're all from the Wu family. The document listed when those people on the list accepted pay, and when they provided information and details like those. I have memorized and written these people's name earlier, and I've put it inside your clothes now."

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, "You know how to open locks?"

Lady Ya replied, "I've received training on theft and spying since I was young, and because of my status and my body, Ya'er has frequently been sent overseas to gather information. Besides my Imperial Brother and Zhao Mu, no one knows about this. Now that I've told you everything, you should know how my heart feels!"

Xiang Shaolong kissed her and said, "I, Xiang Shaolong's words are as good as gold, I will not let you down."

Only now did he understand why the King of Zhao favors her so much, and he also thought of another question, "Now that everyone knows that you have fallen in love with me, won't they be suspicious of you?"

Lady Ya replied, "Don't worry! They're so sure that I will not

be infatuated with any man for long, and that I'm a born slut. Besides, my family name is Zhao as well, why would I help an outsider deal with my own blood family?"

Xiang Shaolong can't help but ask, "Can you really harden your heart to deal with your family?"

Lady Ya replied sadly, "I have totally lost hope in the Zhao family. Not only are they biased against anyone who is not from Zhao, they are also biased against those Zhaos with other family names. This is the reason the totally incapable Zhao Kuo can replace the great general Lian Po, which resulted in the great tragedy of Changping, causing the state of Zhao to weaken. Now I only wish to go far away with you, and not end up being the slave of a country doomed to end, and end up being a cheap prostitute."

Xiang Shaolong nodded his head in understanding, finally knowing why ever since her husband Zhao Kuo died, she spent her life in such a intoxicated mess. It's because she has given up hope on the future, so she's numbing herself with her wanton lifestyle. Lady Ya's voice turned quiet and she said quickly and impatiently, "Wu Yingyuan's activities overseas, my Imperial Brother has heard about it long ago and he even suspects that he is in touch with the Qins. It's just that Master Wu controls almost half of our state's livestock and is very reputable in Zhao, with an army of thousands of warriors, my Imperial Brother dare not make any rash moves, afraid that he will rock the stability and invite other states to take the opportunity to attack!"

Xiang Shaolong felt his skin go numb, so it turns out that the King of Zhao really intends to get rid of the Wu family.

Lady Ya said, "Last night after you defeated Lian Jin, Imperial Brother and Zhao Mu held a secret discussion and they decided to pull you to their side and make use of you to deal with the Wu family. Later Imperial Brother summoned me and wants me to use my beauty to charm you so that you cannot pull yourself away. But Ya'er knows about my own feelings, the one who got charmed instead is Ya'er!"

Xiang Shaolong remembered his appointment with Zhao Mu tonight and felt a cold shiver. He did not expect that the King of Zhao would be involved in the background as well.

Lady Ya said, "You can still drag for time now, because Zhao Mu's men will go to Mulberry Village these two days to find out your background. Only when they're sure you have no problem, they will use you."

Xiang Shaolong really felt his whole body turn cold. If they capture Mei Canniang, that'll be terrible.

Lady Ya kissed him gently as she said, "Ya'er knows that not only is your swordplay unparalleled, but your wits is even greater. Now that I have given my life to you, we will share wealth and woes together, you must not abandon Ya'er!"

Xiang Shaolong hugged her tightly and said quietly, "Now let us put on a show, pretend that we've just had some fun, understand?"

Lady Ya's pretty face blushed and nodded her head in

agreement.

Xiang Shaolong moved immediately, using his hands and mouth and messed up her clothes and hair before leaving in a hurry.

CHAPTER 5 Scheming Snake

[Translated by JEAN]

THE NAME LIST was on the table. Master Wu, Wu Yingyuan and Tao Fang all looked somber. Surprising there was also Lian Jin, Li Shan and Wu Hei's names on it as well. Besides Tao Fang, Li Shan is the closest to Xiang Shaolong among all the warriors, but who would have expected that he is the King of Zhao's spy.

No wonder Prince Shaoyuan came asking for Su Nu at such a perfect timing, because it's all a plot. Xiang Shaolong feels the pain of betrayal by a good friend.

Master Wu said quietly, "Although Zhao Ya is highly trustworthy, but we must still try various methods to check if this name list is authentic. Yingyuan will be in charge of this."

He then told Tao Fang, "You'll send men to rush to Mulberry Village immediately and move Mei Canniang to a secret location. Then you'll bribe the people there heavily and ask them to lie for Shaolong, to cover this secret that Shaolong is a descendant of a Qin."

Only Shaolong knows his own problem, because no one there knows him at all. Therefore he can only force himself to say, "I've always hunted and stayed in the mountains, and only went to Mulberry Village recently. I've always stayed at an isolated valley..."

Tao Fang patted his own chest and said, "That's no problem, I'll get some people to disguise themselves as villagers. I guarantee that no one will know."

Xiang Shaolong felt assured.

Master Wu sighed, "It's all thanks to Shaolong this time that we find out how dire our circumstances are now. If not for Shaolong's victory last night, if Lian Jin marries Fang'er then it'll be terrible. From now on, I will not look upon myself as a Zhao. Luckily we have connections with the rich and powerful in various other states, we'll have people accepting us no matter where we run to. The problem is how can we avoid the Zhaos coming after us?"

Xiang Shaolong was feeling perplexed, why is it that Master Wu seems very confident of moving the entire clan out of

the city?

Master Wu showed his calmness in the face of danger and said coldly, "It's now time to settle the accounts for autumn. I'll take the opportunity to arrange everything when the herdsmen in charge from the various places comes and prepare to react to the situation. Since he's unkind to me, I shall not show him any mercy either. Since King Xiaocheng wants to deal with me, I'll drag him down at the same time."

Wu Yingyuan added, "Keeping soldiers for a thousand days, so that they can be used for a time. Now it seems like an critical time for Zhao Wuzhuo and the death warriors he trained."

Master Wu agreed heartily. This King of Livestock who has always been loyal to the state of Zhao is really furious now.

Tao Fang explained to Xiang Shaolong, "Zhao Wuzhuo is Master's godson, and he goes around especially to adopt orphans and give them rigorous training to become our main force. We have a few thousand people and they're usually scattered around the pastures near Handan. Only the few of us know about this matter."

Wu Yingyuan said, "With them helping Shaolong, it'll be even better. Even if the King of Zhao send his troops to attack our Wu's castle, we can still defend ourselves for about half a month."

Master Wu said, "We'll postpone Shaolong and Fang'er's wedding to a month later, then on the pretext that we're preparing for the wedding, we can cover up a lot of our

movements.”

Tao Fang added, “I can use the excuse that I’m reorganizing Wu Hei’s men to make changes to the troops and transfer most of the spies out of here so that the Zhaos will not be suspicious.”

Master Wu said with determination, “We’ll do it that way then.”

He turned towards Xiang Shaolong and said, “Shaolong has to pretend to be attracted by benefits and lust, and accept Zhao Mu’s bribes. You must also pretend to be enamored with Zhao Ya’s beauty so that the Zhao people will not get suspicious. I will give you some information to leak to Zhao Mu so that they will trust you even more.”

Xiang Shaolong agreed sincerely.

Master Wu reached out and grabbed his shoulders and said with a smile, “Go and see Fang’er! She came over just now asking for you.”

Xiang Shaolong wanted to smile back, but he has lost the mood for it.

In the 21st century, when he leave his home everyday, he seldom thought of whether he can return home alive. But in this warring states period, not only does he have to worry about not coming home, he has to worry about disasters falling from the sky and affecting the whole clan. For survival, everyone must make himself become the stronger one, or rely on the stronger ones to survive.

Xiang Shaolong found Wu Tingfang who was practicing her horse riding and archery skills at the training field. After practicing with her a round of archery, he returned to his peaceful home and saw that there is a wooden sign hung outside the door that says “Hidden Dragon Abode”. It turns out to be Wu Tingfang’s work.

Ting Fangshi and the four maids were happily pruning the bushes and flowers, humming a song and on seeing his return, she was ecstatic. She hugged him and Wu Tingfang and took them into the house. Before they could sit down properly, a huge group of servants carrying a hundred odd large and small chests came over. Xiang Shaolong was dumbfounded while Wu Tingfang said with a laugh, “What’s so strange, Tingfang already belongs to you. Father and Mother has no objections, so naturally I’m moving in to stay with you.”

Xiang Shaolong did not imagine that in this era, there would actually be cohabitation. He suddenly understood, to the Wu family talk about loyalty and piety are all unreliable words. The most reliable would be to use the Wu family’s most alluring beauty to bind his body and heart.

But he is indeed extremely fond and infatuated with Wu Tingfang, so he said with a laugh, “I have the power and the responsibility to ask you for bed tax every night before you’re allowed to sleep.”

Wu Tingfang’s pretty face blushed and she stared at him charmingly before instructing the servants how she wants

her things to be placed and how she wants the two rooms and side hall, which has been set aside for her at the East Chamber, decorated. Ting Fangshi came to his side and said with a laugh, "Grand Young Miss said that there're eight rooms in the West Chamber, the first room is mine. The rest will be for the women you marry in future. If it's not enough, we can ask someone to build another extension."

Xiang Shaolong put his arms around her waist and asked, "Happy?"

Ting Fangshi nodded her head shyly, her expression overjoyed.

To be able to make the woman he loves happy, is a man's greatest achievement. He thought of a matter and asked, "The beauties that came with you to Handan, do you know where they've gone?"

Ting Fangshi shook her head sadly, and said, "I heard that some of them were sent away to become camp prostitutes. Besides me, none of them are in Wu residence."

Only now was Xiang Shaolong's question answered. No wonder they have to look for so many beauties in the villages, so it's to comfort the army who have left their hometown and are now stationed overseas. He can't help but feel pity for them.

Only by unifying the various states and establishing a new law and regime, will this problem of belittling women's rights be solved. Hai! Even if the world is unified, they still have about 2000 old years to go before there can be some

hope of civilization. This is such a far and difficult journey.

After lunch, he hugged Ting Fangshi as he took an afternoon nap and only woke up a little after 3pm. Wu Tingfang is still happily decorating her room at this time. After Xiang Shaolong freshened up, he went to her room and looked on with interest as Chunying and the other maids worked under her instructions.

Although it's called a room, but the size is even bigger than the modern man's living room. The most eye-catching item is the huge bed which took up a quarter of the room, and it can sleep seven to eight people very comfortably. The bed itself is like a room. The four corners of the bed were four round wooden pillars carved with flowers, with wooden beams cementing it to the roof and hung on it were huge curtains.

Once he thought of this beauty waiting obediently every night on this bed that has layers of thick blankets, with pillows all over the bed, waiting for his love, his heart began burning.

There's even a copper mirror, huge wardrobe and chests, and soft carpet on the ground. On the table in the corner of the room there's a copper incense burner, burning an intoxicating fragrance. This is the first time Xiang Shaolong tasted such an atmosphere. In this romantic room with the fragrance wafting around, he really does not want to think about the devious world outside.

Hai! If only he does not have to go and see Zhao Mu tonight.

With Wu Tingfang around, the four maids were more serious and dared not flirt and joke with him as usual. Wu Tingfang came to him sweating sweetly and holding his hand, asked him, "Is Fang'er's room decorated comfortably?"

Xiang Shaolong replied with a smile, "I appreciate the huge bed the most."

Wu Tingfang took a look at him and smiled charmingly, "After you return from your feast tonight, remember to climb up the bed! I'll stay awake and wait for you."

Xiang Shaolong chortled and pulled her as he walked out and said with a laugh, "Come! Let me serve you while you bath."

Wu Tingfang felt her neck burning and although she said no, but her dainty little feet still went after him obediently.

That evening, Zhao Mu sent a carriage to pick him up and send him to his residence at the north of the city. Surprisingly the place was not decorated, nor were there a welcoming party. Zhao Mu received him at an elegant porch in the back garden. On one side there's a huge window, and looking out the window with the drawn blinds is a breathtaking scenery. The two of them leaned on the soft cushion and sat on the carpet, separated by a huge table in between which was filled with wine and dishes. The atmosphere was nice and after the servants retreated, only the two of them were left.

As Zhao Mu encouraged him to drink, he also off handedly asked about his background. Xiang Shaolong hurriedly told him the story he had already made up, and spoke about how

he met Tao Fang. Once he thought of the spy Li Shan, he spoke the truth as well, not hiding a single thing from him. Naturally Zhao Mu knows that he is not lying and was very satisfied and said, "Shaolong's sword skills were obviously imparted by a good teacher. I wonder who your teacher is?"

Xiang Shaolong wanted to say that he learnt it from a recluse staying deep in the mountains but their eyes met and he could feel the anticipation in the other person's eyes. He had a change of mind and thought that by using a wooden sword to fight his enemy, he may already have revealed his connection with Mozi Sect.

Yuan Zong once said that Handan is Zhao Mo's base and if Zhao Mo's leader Yan Ping wants fame and fortune, naturally he will have to throw in his lot with the King of Zhao. So maybe Zhao Mu has already guessed his relation with Yuan Zong, so he hurriedly changed his tack and told him selectively about how he ended up being down and out in Wu An and how he met Yuan Zong. He stressed that because he is in pursuit of fame and riches, he refused to join Yuan Zong's organization. His relationship with Yuan Zong is purely friendship. Zhao Mu smiled when he heard this, and with a 'dang' he sounded the bell next to him, which will summon the servants. Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that it's a close shave and although he knows what is happening, he pretended to look at him in bewilderment.

Indeed, a tall and thin man wearing hemp clothes walked in barefooted. Xiang Shaolong saw that this person's bearing is serious, his face sinister, his eyes sharp like an eagle and he

has the air of a highly skilled pugilist, and looks imposing. He secretly thought to himself that no wonder even a highly skilled pugilist like Yuan Zong has to run for his life. That person came up to the both of them and paid his respects before sitting down on the carpet. Although his back was rim rod straight, it doesn't seem that he feels awkward in any way.

Zhao Mu said with a smile, "This is Mr Yan Ping, who is the Juzi of the Mozi Sect in Handan, and also a guest of his Majesty. He was sitting next door earlier, and has heard everything that Shaolong said earlier."

Yan Ping looked at Shaolong coldly and said, "Imperial Protector was able to defeat Lian Jin, obviously you have been taught by the traitor of our Mozi Sect, Yuan Zong. I wonder if he has handed you his Juzi token as well?"

Xiang Shaolong felt a stab in his heart and knows that Yuan Zong has been killed by them. They could not find the Juzi Token after searching his body, that's why they asked him. He pretended not to understand and asked, "What is Juzi Token?"

Yan Ping sized him up for a moment before saying to Zhao Mu calmly, "I believe that Yuan Zong will not hand the Juzi token to an outsider. But as to why he would impart his sword skills to Imperial Protector; that is something I still cannot understand."

Zhao Mu asked in astonishment, "How do you know that Shaolong is not the holder of the Juzi token?"

Yan Ping replied slowly, "Us Mozi follows the way of being frugal and hard-working. Our abode are simple thatched huts. We use eathern bowls, drink think soup, eat coarse grains of rice and wear hemp and deer skin. If Yuan Zong is willing to hand him the Juzi token, it will be because he has become a Mohist. But Imperial Protector is not keeping himself away from women and good food, obviously he is not a Mohist."

Xiang Shaolong and Zhao Mu were equally surprised.

Zhao Mu no longer harbors any suspicions towards Xiang Shaolong and he said happily, "I admire Shaolong's honesty and selfless attitude very much."

He added with a lowered voice, "If Shaolong had been lying earlier, I'm afraid your blood would have been spilled by now."

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be terrified and said, "Thank you Marquis for your trust."

But in his heart he was secretly cursing his ancestors. Yan Ping stood up quietly.

Xiang Shaolong said politely, "I am indebted to Mr Yuan Zong for teaching me his skills. I wonder where is he now? That time he suddenly urged me to leave Wu An; and yet he refused to travel with me. I felt that something is not quite right but at that time I was not yet aware that he is related to Mohism."

Yan Ping said icily, "It's best that you are unaware, and it's

best that Imperial Protector do not ask about the affairs of us Mohists in future.”

He bid his farewell to Zhao Mu after he finished his words, and left. After he left, Zhao Mu said with a laugh, “Juzi is well respected, and has 300 death warriors under him, each of them highly skilled, and each one of them can fight against a hundred people. Juzi himself is the best among the highly skilled. Even when he sees his Majesty, he need not pay his respects, so he’s already being quite polite to Shaolong.”

Of course Xiang Shaolong had to show that he did not mind, but in his heart he was thinking how he can avenge his benefactor Yuan Zong.

Zhao Mu smiled slightly, and the scar on his face twitched slightly, making his smile look especially cold and heartless. A flash of brilliant light flashed past his eyes and he said nonchalantly, “I am very pleased with Shaolong’s performance, so I shall be frank and tell Shaolong what I feel.”

Xiang Shaolong knows that the act is coming, so he pretended to be all ears. But undeniably, Zhao Mu has a certain charm about him, no wonder Zhao Ya was infatuated with him for so many years.

Zhao Mu stared at him and said, “To me, everyone in the world is either a friend or an enemy. If you’re my man, I can guarantee you endless wealth, beauties, power and status. But if you become my enemy, I will use all means to destroy you.”

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, how tyrannical can you be, but he said respectfully instead, "Shaolong understands!"

Zhao Mu said, "Shaolong, don't blame me for my bad choice in choosing Lian Jin, that's why I dealt with you. However I underestimated you. Until now I still do not understand why is it that even after you've been given strong aphrodisiac, you're still in control of your senses and was able to emerge the victor instead of the loser?"

Of course Xiang Shaolong cannot tell him that he overheard his nefarious plot, so he pretended to be embarrassed and replied, "I'm lecherous by nature, and added to the fact that I am very popular with women, so sometimes I cannot handle them all and have to use aphrodisiacs. Initially just one or two pills will be enough to take effect, but once I've used them too much, I have to take them in large quantities before any effect can be seen. Therefore I'm not really afraid of such things."

Zhao Mu slapped the table and chortled, "So that's the case. But your body is indeed a gift from heaven, you still have very good stamina after such strenuous activities."

His bright eyes roamed his body. Xiang Shaolong was secretly feeling worried, if this homosexual takes a liking to him, it'll be terrible.

Luckily Zhao Mu very quickly retracted his stare, and said seriously, "In the past Shaolong belongs to the Wu family, there's no debate about that. But now that you've become

his Majesty's personal protector, you need to be impartial and put Great Zhao in front of all other things. Do Shaolong understand my meaning?"

Shaolong replied seriously. "Naturally Shaolong knows who is the one I should be loyal to. Marquis please put your mind at ease."

Zhao Mu said with relief, "I will test you on a few matters, once I've confirmed your loyalty, I will naturally promote you heavily to his Majesty, and I promise that your future will be bright. It won't be too far fetched thinking for you to be appointed as duke or marquis."

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be overjoyed, got up and kowtowed his thanks. But in his heart he was secretly lamenting, what if he wants to borrow Wu Tingfang and have fun for a few nights, what shall he do then? Zhao Mu chuckled, "Get up quickly, talk about work will end here, now it's time for us to enjoy."

"Dang! Dang!"

This time Xiang Shaolong opened his eyes wide to see who will be coming in. Zhao Mu is the second most important person in the state of Zhao, so the things he show off to others won't be too bad. Zhao Mu looked at his expression and thought to himself that this person is willing to work for Tao Fang for just 50 copper coins, and is lecherous as well, so with his lure of fame and beauty, there's no way he won't work for him. The sound of bangles jingling was heard and a pair of beauties walked into the porch carrying a long satin

pouch.

Xiang Shaolong looked more thoroughly and his eyes immediately shone. It turns out that not only are the girls dressed similarly, with their hair piled high up, wearing a thin gauze as sheer as the wings of a fly, hiding and revealing their snowy skin at the same time. The tight inner layer bounded the voluptuous body that is waiting to burst out of its bindings, the pretty features on their faces are identical. It turns out that they are twins. Their eyes were bright and clear, only a thin layer of make up on their pretty face, but their glowing jade skin is even more eye catching than anyone else with make up. Beneath their long and slim eyebrows, their bright eyes looked lively, with two bewitching dimples on their cheeks, enough to charm anyone before they even smiled. Their beauty is divine, their body enticing. Their looks are prettier than Shu'er, and only lose a little to Wu Tingfang and Zhao Ya.

The two girls dragged the long satin pouch together, and walked daintily towards them and knelt down. They lowered their head and said at the same time, "Ladies from the State of Yue, Tian Zhen and Tian Feng pay their respects to Imperial Protector Xiang."

Only now did Xiang Shaolong regain his senses, and when he saw Zhao Mu staring at him, he smiled embarrassingly. Zhao Mu took over the long satin pouch and leaving the two of them to continue kneeling, he loosened the pouch and took out an ancient sword. He said with a laugh, "When it comes to making swords, no one can surpass the sword smiths

from the State of Yue, they were the ones who made the first metal sword. The swords that they made through fire is so much more effective than the previous era's copper swords. This Yue sword in my hand is named Flying Rainbow. I see that your wooden sword is extremely heavy and not convenient to carry around, and as the saying goes, a precious sword can only match a hero, so I will give you this sword tonight."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly exclaiming how formidable. It seems that this Zhao Mu really knows how to bribe. If not for the fact that he came from the 21st century, with his own principles and attitude towards gratitude and hatred, he may really have been bought over by him. He pretended to be thankful and took over the long sword respectfully. The sword may be heavy, but it's a lot lighter compared to the wooden sword. The two girls were still kneeling, their snowy white necks, their tightened waists, their puffed up bosoms, is enough to make anyone have other thoughts. Their submissiveness, makes one feel that they can be tortured at will, which adds on to one's fantasy. Zhao Mu saw him holding the sword and looking at the two girls morosely and joked, "Precious sword and beauties, I think Shaolong prefers the latter. But why don't you take a look at the sword first!"

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly pulled the sword out from the sheath. A cold air and a bright reflection came out together with the sword, like the moon breaking out from behind the clouds. Flying Rainbow was five feet long, and there seems

to be a intricate design on its body, the pommel was designed to look like seven phoenix eyes inlaid with gold with blue colored glaze. The sword was straight and flat, good for slashing or chopping, the tip of the sword long and pointed, and extremely sharp. Even for someone like Xiang Shaolong who's not really an expert, he can tell that what he's holding in his hand is a treasure.

He was still concentrating and looking at the sword when he suddenly heard Zhao Mu ask, "Will Shaolong be choosing the elder or younger sister?"

Xiang Shaolong was stunned for a moment and asked, "There's isn't any difference, right!"

He secretly sighed, since he proclaimed himself a lecher, naturally he'll have to put on a convincing act, but luckily this is not a difficult task.

Zhao Mu's eyes settled on the dainty bodies of this pair of sisters from Yue and said with a lecherous smile, "Usually there's no difference at all, but when it comes to the bed, you'll see the difference."

He commanded with a low voice, "Stand up and take off your clothes."

The pair of Yue twin sisters stood up on hearing the command, and blushing a little, obediently removed the outer layer of gauze and their innerwear, revealing their snowy white naked body. Their skin was as soft and shiny as white jade, glowing under the light reflected from the lamp. Especially the welcoming and come-hither expression on

their faces, any man who sees that will feel blood rushing through their bodies and their hearts pumping in excitement.

The two girls were stealing looks at the handsome and muscular Xiang Shaolong, this is the first time they've seen such a fine man. Xiang Shaolong felt as if he's now in the world's most elegant and upper class brothel, enjoying how he's being treated like an emperor. He's seen many women, but it's the first time he's seen a pair of perfect, identical beauties. No wonder Zhao Mu ignored Lady Ya, because he has too many choices, and he has to deal with the King of Zhao as well.

Precisely because of this, he started having sadistic tendencies, and tortured and killed his beloved Shu'er. Now he's trying to bribe him with beauties to make use of him to destroy the Wu family. Zhao Mu's gaze roamed around the two women's body and said with an appreciative sigh, "Look, only Yue women's bodies are like theirs, like a tender grass bending as the wind blows. Our Zhao women are a little plumper, only Wu Tingfang and Zhao Ya are rare exceptions."

Xiang Shaolong heard the way he mention Wu Tingfang and Zhao Ya under such circumstances and was furious. But he can only remain silent. Zhao Mu sighed again and was about to speak, when Xiang Shaolong, who's afraid he is going to bring up his request about Wu Tingfang, suddenly stood up and said, "Heh! Marquis, I would like to relieve myself for a moment. I've had too much to drink."

Besides the excuse that he needs the toilet, he really cannot think of any other excuses.

Zhao Mu smiled and said, "The elder sister will accompany Shaolong!"

Tian Zhen agreed and walked Shaolong in.

Xiang Shaolong followed this naked beauty, looking at her alluring body, and feel embarrassed and hilarious at the same time, secretly thinking that in the past others have been saying that he's stubborn and outrageous. But compared to these royalty in ancient times, he's a small fry compared to them. But then only women in this era would be willing to serve men like that. In the 21st century, if you ask a newly acquainted lady to help you to the toilet, it'll be strange if she doesn't give you a slap first. If he can return to the 21st century, once he reveals a bit of what happens here, he's sure that the queue of men wanting to take the time travel machine will be long enough to go round the world a few times.

Once they went behind the screen, the alluring Yue beauty knelt down and held up the chamber pot, which was placed behind the screen and waited for him to pee. Looking at her blushing face, Xiang Shaolong does not know whether to laugh or cry, and thought to himself, how can he pee like that? He could hear from beyond the screen moans and pants, and he knows without even looking that Zhao Mu is now molesting that pretty sister.

Tian Zhen's face blushed redder and stole a glance at him,

chewing her lips. Obviously she is aroused once she heard those sounds. Xiang Shaolong had no intention of peeing at all, it was just an excuse to avoid talking with Zhao Mu. So he said quietly, "Put it down!"

Tian Zhen was stunned but still put the chamber pot down obediently.

Xiang Shaolong pulled her up and thought to himself that it's better to do it with her here than in front of that bisexual Zhao Mu. It would be such a pity to let such a beauty off. Besides, that would make Zhao Mu more suspicious of him, so without hesitation, he pulled her into his arms and started helping himself to her. For a moment, the alluring sounds of women moaning can be heard from inside and outside the screen.

CHAPTER 6
The Death Of The King Of Qin
[Translated by JEAN]

WHEN Xiang Shaolong was in the carriage going back to the Wu residence, he was still reliving his experience earlier.

Either deliberately or not, separated by a screen, they were having a competition on sexual stamina with the pair of Yue beauties. In the end Xiang Shaolong deliberately lost to him and ended his act earlier. As expected when he carried the limp elder sister Tian Zhen out, Zhao Mu and Tian Feng were almost half-dead, so naturally he could not ask him for Wu Tingfang now.

By now Xiang Shaolong is aware that although Zhao Mu's swordsmanship is excellent, but his stamina cannot be compared to a warrior like him. He hurriedly bid his farewell.

Tian Zhen can't bear to let him go, and the look in her eyes shows that she wants to swallow him whole.

Zhao Mu is smart, naturally he knows that Xiang Shaolong gave in to him deliberately. He was secretly complimenting Xiang Shaolong for his consideration and knowing what to do, so he ordered his men to send him back to the Wu residence in his carriage to show how much he admires him.

The grand looking carriage drove out of the Marquis residence, traveling lonsomely in the quiet and dark streets.

Four warriors walked in front holding lanterns to lead the way for the horse carriage, another four warriors walked behind the carriage for protection.

Xiang Shaolong was troubled, thinking of endless people and things. Now he is totally immersed in this era, if there is a choice, he would not want to go back to his own era.

Just as he was day dreaming, he was suddenly jolted awake but the hurried sounds of hooves beat.

Xiang Shaolong became alert and looked towards the back of the carriage.

The four warriors were just turning their heads to look back.

The darkened street, a lone steed was running near, and by the time they could take a good look, they saw that it's a

warrior dressed in black, with a black cloth covering the head and face as well, in his hand a long sword, galloping towards them with murderous intent. One look and he knows that it's nothing good.

The four warriors roared in unison and drew their swords, pulling their horses back to receive the enemy.

The assassin increased his speed and came towards them like a hurricane. He lifted his hand and took out something black from the saddlebag of the horse and flew towards the sky. When he leapt over their heads, it became a huge net with sharp hooks, covering the head and faces of the four warriors.

The four warriors may be highly skilled, but their opponent came prepared, and he uses ingenious methods so that they are caught unawares and in a short moment the four of them were trapped.

As they yelled in surprise, they struggled to get out from the net but the sharp hooks in the net tore into their skins. Amidst their screams, the four of them tumbled down their horses in a heap.

When the assassin came to the side of the carriage, there was a flash from his blade and the bamboo window shattered, scaring Xiang Shaolong into scrambling to a corner. Right at this time that person throw a long thing into the carriage and when it landed on the floor of the carriage, it moved and wriggled towards Xiang Shaolong.

Xiang Shaolong took a clearer look and secretly exclaimed.

He turned a somersault and fell onto the streets outside through the window. It turned out that thing thrown towards him is a poisonous snake with its head raised. If he did not have extremely quick reflexes, he'll definitely be bitten by that poisonous snake.

While Xiang Shaolong was still rolling on the ground, that assassin slashed at the fallen warriors and shot four arrows at the other four warriors rushing towards him. In their rush, the four warriors did not see what was happening and were hit by the arrows and fell.

The assassin turned his horse back and ran towards Xiang Shaolong who was still on the ground.

This is the first time Xiang Shaolong encountered someone so formidable, and just as he was about to spring up, that assassin shot an arrow at him, fierce and accurate.

Xiang Shaolong has no choice but to tumble away, and avoided his opponent's three concessive arrows before he had a chance to jump up.

Maybe the assassin used up his arrows, so he switched to a long sword and attacked.

Xiang Shaolong did not have a chance to draw his sword and had to tumble away to avoid him again. But this time he tumbled towards the back of his opponent's horse. His opponent only managed to turn the horse around after he jumped up again and drew the Flying Rainbow sword Zhao Mu gave him.

The two of them met directly face to face.

The assassin was stunned and shouted, "You're not Zhao Mu?"

Xiang Shaolong heard the high-pitched voice, it's actually a lady, and was startled.

The masked lady shouted and dashed forward on her horse, and when she was about five steps away, the glare from her sword blossomed like a flower, attacking towards him like a storm.

Xiang Shaolong saw that the person she wanted to kill is his own enemy Zhao Mu, so he was not willing to hurt her. But he saw that her swordplay is extremely exquisite, and his hands began to itch and he executed the Mozi swordplay, trying to flick his opponent's sword with a diagonal slash. He was about to strike his opponent's sword but unexpectedly the tip of the sword touched empty air, it turned out his aim was out and his opponent's sword has already taken the opportunity to invade directly.

Xiang Shaolong did not expect her to be so formidable and he had to move diagonally down suddenly to avoid her.

The girl did not return for him but rode away in her horse, cursing icily, "Working for the devil."

The sound of hooves beat grow further and further, into the darkened streets.

The eight warriors were all dead, obviously the arrows and hooks were dipped in extremely poisonous substances, and

even strong men like them could not hold on for long.

The streets were soon filled with Zhao soldiers looking for the whereabouts of the assassin.

Zhao Mu's expression was serious as he said, "The poisonous snake that person threw into the carriage is called 'Golden Throat Seal', its movements are swift as lightning, and extremely venomous. Once bitten the throat will become constricted immediately. Shaolong is really lucky that you were able to jump out the carriage in time."

Xiang Shaolong heaved a sigh of cold air. He was relying on his reflexes from his many years of training. The poisonous snake was going to bite his leg and he was able to retract his legs in time and somersaulted out the window, which was indeed a very dangerous situation.

Zhao Mu patted his shoulder and said, "Luckily you helped me block off this bad luck. If it was me, she might have gotten what she wanted."

He added with a cold snort, "I'll like to see where she can run to."

Right at this time a rider rushed over and after getting off his horse, he came to Zhao Mu and spoke a few words in his ears.

Zhao Mu was ecstatic on hearing the news and told Xiang Shaolong, "I have something important to speak to his Majesty about immediately, I will discuss with you about the assassin later."

He went up his horse and left, with a hundred odd warriors hurrying after him.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly alarmed, what news did Zhao Mu receive that made him so excited?

But since it's no use pondering over it, Xiang Shaolong went up the horse and returned to the Wu residence with the accompaniment of 12 guards.

He had just stepped past the main door when the guard stationed at the door took him to the study room immediately. Wu Yingyuan and Tao Fang were both there, their expressions grave. Obviously something serious has happened.

After Xiang Shaolong sat down, Master Wu said, "The King of Qin is dead!"

Xiang Shaolong looked at him blankly, thinking that the King of Qin is not your father, so what if he's dead.

Tao Fang knows that he does not understand the critical point in this matter and said, "The successor is King Xiaowen and during the bereavement period, the state of Qin will not engage their army for some time. Therefore all the other states will make use of this time to engage the plans they set aside earlier due to their fear of Qin attacking, and this includes expanding and conquering other smaller states."

Xiang Shaolong finally understood and said, "So we have to be worried that the King of Zhao will step up on his efforts to deal with us."

Wu Yingyuan sighed, "This is not our biggest worry. But because I'm always in contact with Qin's Lu Buwei. This person is wealthy and scheming, and was our greatest back up, but the newly crowned King Xiaowen may seem respectful to him for saving his son, he's still wary of him as he's a Han. Ever since Lu Buwei went to Qin, he's only a very wealthy guest and has no power at all, and everyone knows Xiaowen was behind all these. Now that he has ascended the throne, Lu Buwei may lose his standing and this will break off all our relations with Qin.

Xiang Shaolong thought of something and asked quietly, "Is Lu Buwei trying to get Ying Zheng back to Xianyang through us?"

The three of them looked immediately stunned and stared at him speechlessly, as if it's the first time they knew him.

After the three of them exchanged looks, Master Wu's fat body trembled for a moment before he took a deep breath and said, "Shaolong is indeed more astute than others, and your words strike close to the heart. But you must not leak any of this out, or else not a single piece of tile will be left intact in the Wu family's castle."

Xiang Shaolong laughed to himself, "I even know that Ying Zheng is actually the son of Lu Buwei borne by Zhao Ji, and Lu Buwei gave Zhao Ji to the King of Qin and she was already pregnant at that time. So the King is only Ying Zheng's father in name. But some historians later pointed out that Emperor Qin was cruel towards Lu Buwei, so it doesn't really seem

like Lu Buwei is his birth father. Such a messy affair, no one is really clear about it.

Anyway it's a fact that Lu Buwei wants to get Ying Zheng back to Xianyang. Wu Yingyuan said, "Amongst the four great princes, Prince Pingyuan of Zhao has passed away, Huang Xie, who is Prince Chunshen of Chu is useless, and we can ignore him. Prince Mengchang of Qi is always sickly which leaves us with Wei's Prince Xinling, Wuji. This person is well versed in the art of war and has numerous capable men under him. He took care of Zhao because Prince Pingyuan's wife is his sister but now that Prince Pingyuan is dead, I'm afraid change is inevitable."

Master Wu nodded his head and said, "The death of the king of Qin, has really further complicated matters which are already complicated, but for us there's only advantages and no disadvantages. Because Zhao will certainly take the opportunity while the strong Qin is ceasing war to expand, so they'll have no time to deal with us. We even have time to take a breather and plan at leisure. Heaven is indeed helping us."

Tao Fang laughed, "The Yans are going to be in trouble!"

Wu Yingyuan shook his head and sighed, "That is called getting what they deserve. The King of Zhao will certainly take the opportunity to carve them up so that he can expand his territory. But I heard that Prince Dan of Yan is a talent, so it's best that they can drag Zhao along for a few years, then we'll have a lot of time."

They continued their discussion a little longer and decided not to contact Lu Buwei for the time being, and not touch Ying Zheng, who is a prisoner of war, for the moment. They will sit and watch what happens before making a decision and after the discussion, each went their own ways.

Xiang Shaolong went back to his Hidden Dragon Abode, and of the four maids only Dongying, who was the most fair and voluptuous amongst them were struggling to stay awake and wait for him. The rest of the ladies were already in dreamland.

Dongying helped him shower and change but when Xiang Shaolong saw that her clothes were all drenched, he served her instead and helped her remove her wet clothing and dry her body.

Dongying was embarrassed, ecstatic and stunned but of course she will not push him away. She could only let him wipe her body with the towel and as her body started heating up, she heard Xiang Shaolong asking her, "How long have all of you been in the Wu family?"

Dongying replied quietly, "The three of us were sold into the Wu family since young."

She continued in a whisper, "Now we only ask that Master does not think too badly of us, and let us serve you for the rest of our lives. That would be our greatest reward. We've never seen someone as easy going as Master."

Xiang Shaolong secretly exclaimed to himself that no one else in this era respects women as much as him. Pity rose up

in him and he hugged her, kissing and caressing, but still controlling himself, not daring to arouse her too much. He has been going from women to women these few days and has enjoyed this ancient era's life of merrymaking, wine and beauties. Never has he been so uncontrolled. He just had fun with the Yue lady earlier, so no matter what delectable beauty is in front of him now, he can only let go of the opportunity for now.

He whispered into her ears, "Tell the other three sisters of yours, I'll find a night to try all of you together, and let you have a taste of a man."

He secretly thought that if Tao Fang can have seven women in one go, he should not have any problems handling four.

Dongying was ecstatic and although she can't bear to leave, she went back to her room.

Xiang Shaolong went to take a look at Ting Fangshi first and covered her up with the blanket before going into Wu Tingfang's room and climbed onto the bed.

That lass is actually naked, but luckily girls of her age are usually sleepyheads. Xiang Shaolong was secretly thanking his lucky stars and as he hugged her, he thought of other things. When he thought of that formidable female assassin, he was so tired he fell asleep right until morning.

The three maids could have heard about the 'good news' from Dongying so their attitude towards Xiang Shaolong now is even more bashful. If Ting Fangshi and Wu Tingfang is not with him having breakfast now, he might not be able to

constrain himself and start feasting now that his energy is recharged.

At Hidden Dragon Abode, Xiang Shaolong felt like he's in a land of beauties and he almost forgot he's from the 21st century. He took the opportunity to touch the four maids while they were serving him tea and food and the four maids naturally bashfully allowed his rude behavior. Wu Tingfang grew up in a wealthy family and is used to seeing such things happening, so to her it's a normal situation. She did not mind at all and was even smiling. With him by her side, Ting Fangshi is already very satisfied. Besides, she's used to obeying men so she will never have the intention of interfering.

Xiang Shaolong was purely enjoying himself, thinking that he will not be sick of a lifetime of such a holiday. Just as he was lamenting that men of this era is really fortunate, he was summoned by the King of Zhao into the palace.

The ladies all grumbled while Xiang Shaolong was secretly cursing the king's ancestors. But since it's an order from the big boss, he can only pack up his lecherous thoughts and hurried to the Palace.

The King of Zhao received him in a small hall adjacent to the main hall. Naturally Zhao Mu is his guest as well, but there's Lady Ya and Guo Zhong as well, something which is out of his expectations. There were two other people, and after some introductions, one of them turned out to be the famous great general and premier who had just fought with the Yans

and had hurried back from the front line, Lian Po.

He's not very tall, but quite stout and his manner is imposing. He's about 50 years old, with a wide face which looks extremely well traveled. Although he looked tired, his deep set eyes was still bright. He looks commanding but not cruel, making one feel that he's an elder worthy of respect.

The other person is General Li Mu, who is tall and thin, only two inches shorter than Xiang Shaolong, but for that era he's considered quite tall. He is not older than 40, his looks are stern, carrying the solidity and grace of a soldier.

Lian Po and Li Mu were both sizing him up very carefully.

The King of Zhao told him to dispense with ceremony and offered him a seat.

Zhao Mu said with a straight face, "Shaolong you don't know how lucky you are. You have not officially started on your job yet and now there's an important task for you to take charge of."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly cursing as he voiced out his thanks.

The King of Zhao said with a smile, "There's no one else more suitable than you, because not only must this person be highly skilled and brave, he must also be intelligent and alert, to handle anything that may happen unexpectedly. If you can accomplish this mission, not only will you be greatly rewarded on your return, but you'll be promoted to General as well."

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly replied, "Please give your orders, your Majesty. I will brave through fire and water and will not decline."

All six pairs of eyes were pinned on him.

The King of Zhao asked Lian Po respectfully, "Does Premier thinks that this person can be used?"

Lian Po's intelligent eyes shone as he said, "Shaolong is only an Imperial Protector, but he still maintained a calm composure when he saw us, obviously he is someone who is bold and smart. His movements reveals that he's a skilled martial artists, and it's extremely rare that there's no flaws in him at all. But what I admire most is that although he knows that the mission is not going to be easy, he did not reveal any fear at all, nor did he show any joy on hearing the rewards. It's indeed the great fortune of Zhao to have such a talent."

Lady Ya was ecstatic on hearing this well respected Lian Po complimenting her lover and she stole a glance at Zhao Mu, only to see a flash of murderous intent in his eyes. Apparently he is now harboring thoughts of killing Xiang Shaolong.

Xiang Shaolong was thinking that this Lian Po indeed has formidable insight, no wonder he could become a famed general in Zhao and he immediately said his humble thanks.

Guo Zhong however was thinking that even Zhao Mu and Lian Jin could not topple you, so who else could be more suitable than him for this mission in Zhao.

The King of Zhao laughed heartily and said, "Heaven is helping my country, heaven is helping my country."

He turned towards Zhao Mu and said, "Would Marquis Julu please explain this mission to Shaolong."

Zhao Mu faked a smile and said warmly, "The mission this time may seem simple on the surface, which is to let Shaolong lead 500 riders and escort Lady Pingyuan, her son and Lady Ya to the state of Wei to visit their relatives and to engage in friendly exchanges. Of course, there's something else to it as well, why don't I let Mr Guo say it personally."

Xiang Shaolong shuddered, isn't Prince Shaoyuan the son of Lady Pingyuan? Both of them are like fire and water, why do they want him to escort them? And why does Lady Ya need to go to Wei?

Guo Zhong lowered his voice and said, "Prince Xinling of Wei recently received a book, which documents the best carpenter in the state of Lu, Gongshu Ban's detailed descriptions of the making of various weapons. In all there are 108 machineries of various sizes. One of the pages were leaked and ended up in my hands, and it describes the method of making the cloud ladder that can be used to besiege cities and this ladder is far better than any cloud ladders in use now by all the other states. If we can get this 'Secret Manual of Lu Gong', Great Zhao will definitely become the greatest, and the state of Wei will not be able to use this book and strengthen themselves."

Li Mu, who has been quiet all these time, spoke up, "I've

heard of this matter, and know that one of the pages describes the making of weapons, and using a new formula and pure fire, it can make metal become even harder. If we can get this secret manual, we will be able to have the best weapons.”

The King of Zhao said a little worriedly, “Prince Xinling is sharp and he has a lot of men under him. Luckily Imperial Sister once had a relation with him, so he kept writing to beg Imperial Sister to visit him in Wei. That’s why we can have such a good excuse to send you to escort Imperial Sister there.”

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, so that’s the case. He looked over at Lady Ya in surprise, and remembered that she’s an expert in stealing information.

Lady Ya is afraid that he would be unhappy to know that she once had an affair with Prince Xinling as well and she lowered her head.

Lian Po and Li Mu exchanged glances, both knowing what this is all about.

A look of hatred and jealousy flashed past Zhao Mu’s face again. For such a possessive man like him, even if he is the one who has given up on the woman, he still does not want her heart and body to be taken by another man.

Lian Po said offhandedly, “Marquis Julu has recommended many people but I objected to all of them. Because Prince Xinling knows their background too well, it’ll be difficult for them to accomplish much. It was Lady Ya who

recommended Shaolong, so Shaolong should show your gratitude to her for allowing you a chance to excel.”

Once Xiang Shaolong heard this, he was overjoyed. He knew immediately that Lian Po and Zhao Mu are not on good relationship, that’s why he rebutted him publicly. He dared not look at Zhao Mu and asked instead, “When do we leave?”

The King of Zhao replied, “I’ve sent men to inform Prince Xinling swiftly, you should be able to leave within the next five days. General Li will send scouts ahead first to help you settle all the formalities needed to leave the country along the way.”

Zhao Mu interrupted, “Shaolong cannot return to the Wu residence for these five days, you have to stay in the palace until it’s time to leave. I’ll send someone to inform the Wu family, and they can send people here with things for you or to visit you, understand?”

Xiang Shaolong secretly lamented and after agreeing helplessly, he said, “I have a few gadgets in mind that will be helpful for this mission, I wonder if I can get the craftsmen to make it for me.”

Everyone was stunned, and Guo Zhong said with a laugh, “That’s easy, I’ll send experts to serve you. No matter how difficult it is, they must finish it for you within these five days.”

Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic and thought to himself that he’ll just have to make some light tools that he used to use in the

special task force, and they're sure to be far better than Lu Ban's so called exquisite weapons. However he'll split up the components and ask Guo Zhong's men to make it and he will reassemble them himself in Wei. In that way the other party will not be able to learn the advanced techniques that is 2000 years ahead of them.

After the King of Zhao dismissed all of them, only Lian Po was left behind to discuss matters regarding Yan.

After they left the hall, Zhao Ya happily pulled Xiang Shaolong towards the back palace and said with a smile, "Don't pull such a long face because you cannot get to see your Wu family's beauty! Ya'er is here to accompany you?"

Xiang Shaolong said with a bitter smile, "Actually which are the powerful men who do not have any relationship with you? Can you tell me a few?"

Lady Ya said quietly, "I've begged for your forgiveness long ago. Hei! You're jealous."

And she cast a flirtatious look at him.

Xiang Shaolong knows that he cannot be too calculative over this so he changed the subject, "Is Lady Pingyuan and Prince Shaoyuan simply just going to Wei to visit relatives?"

Lady Ya waited until they were far away from two palace maids who were paying their respects to them before whispering in his ears, "They will not return once they go."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed hoarsely, "What?"

Lady Ya sighed sadly, "It's all because of the battle of Changping. Our population has always been lower than other states, and now that 400,000 of our strong young men has died, we have been encouraging our people to give birth for these past nine years. It's been ruled that for girls who have reached 20 years of age and are still unmarried, the local magistrates will decide for them and anyone who refuses will be sent to the army camps as prostitutes. But unless we have another 10 years, it'll be difficult to regain the population we have lost. That's why everyone thinks lowly of us, or else the King of Yan would not have dared to attack Handan."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed, "But we're the winner now!"

Lady Ya brought him to a huge, beautiful garden and hidden amongst the trees, was another exquisite palace building.

She reach out her hands to hold his muscular arms and said helplessly, "What's the use of a short victory. Besides Yan, everyone else is also eyeing our location with our east facing Yan, west facing Qin, north facing Han and Wei and south joining Humo. Others can afford to lose, but for us every single loss will weaken us more, and who knows when we will fall again. Imperial brother is useless, to place so much trust on that useless and conniving Zhao Mu."

As she spoke, she gritted her teeth, ever so hateful of Zhao Mu who have cheated and discarded her.

Xiang Shaolong finally experienced the feeling of how one will only care for themselves in the face of danger. Isn't Wu

Yingyuan having thoughts of betrayal because of this as well?

The Qin General Bai Qi is the most famous killer devil during the warring states period. Before the battle of Changping where he killed 400,000 Zhao soldiers, he had also executed almost 400,000 soldiers in the Wei army. This move is indeed very vicious, but extremely effective as well.

The two of them walked up the steps and the pretty palace maids knelt down in welcome. When they saw Shaolong, their eyes shone.

Lady Ya took him directly to the bedroom and said with a smile, "This is Ya'er's palace in here, the maids all belong to me. If Shaolong takes a liking to any of them, just instruct them to serve you. For you! No woman would do it unwillingly."

After Lady Ya instructed the palace maids to close the door, she started helping him remove his clothes and later removed her own as well, until they stood naked looking at one another. They hugged and collapsed onto the bed and she sighed, "38 years ago, ever since Wan Xian from Han and these two important blacksmith fell into the hands of the Qin, their weaponry gradually became better than the other states. That's why Imperial Brother places so much importance on this 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual' this time."

She continued softly, "Shaolong, in order to obtain the secret manual, Ya'er may have to sacrifice her body, will you allow me to do that?"

Xiang Shaolong said with a bitter smile, "Without my permission, would things be any different? Your weapon is your beautiful body, if you don't use your beauty is there anything else you can use instead?"

Lady Ya sighed, "If the price to pay is losing you, I'd rather not be able to take the secret manual. Ya'er is already extremely sick of wars. I only want to find a quiet place to stay with Shaolong, and stay away from this environment where everyone is fighting and killing. We'll just spend the rest of our lives in the forest."

Shaolong replied, "We'll talk later about whether you need to sleep with others. That's right! Why have I never heard you mention your own children?"

Lady Ya's expression darkened and she said, "I'm barren, if I have a child, maybe my life would not have been so promiscuous. Shaolong! Will you not love me because of this flaw?"

Xiang Shaolong replied immediately with action. This time Lady Ya was even more heated and compliant than the last time, which Xiang Shaolong thoroughly enjoyed. He understood why for someone like Prince Xinling who can have any beauty with a wave of his hands, he simply couldn't forget this excellent specimen.

After that they slept hugging each other for a while when the craftsmen Guo Zhong sent arrived. Xiang Shaolong spent more than four hours before they understood what they're supposed to make.

Looking at the sketch Xiang Shaolong drew, that craftsman looks totally lost.

Lady Ya saw him talking sensibly as he was explaining the drawings but when she asked him, Xiang Shaolong only smiled and did not reply.

He did not want to make formidable modern weapons, but only hope that he can have a few equipment and tools that would be helpful for espionage and escape.

He still have to spend the next few days in the palace practicing his horsemanship, as that is his weakest point.

To be able to survive in this area and protect loved ones, the only way is to become stronger than others, and more vicious. There is no other way.

CHAPTER 7
Ladies Of The Forbidden Palace
[Translated by JEAN]

IF it was the old Xiang Shaolong, once he meets a beauty, he'll try ways and means to get her and have some fun. But now beauties are aplenty, and extremely submissive as well. However, too much of anything is never good, and having too many women will increase his burden and worries as well. No one would be able to handle all these. Seeing the pretty maids look at him with thirst and desire, he only wants to find a quiet place to be alone. But in this era where even for a trip to the toilet, there'll be a pretty maid attending, it's even more difficult than ascending heaven to

find a place without women. He's slowly coming to understand why women here can click so easily. The key point is in communication. In the modern era, they only need to exchange phone numbers and would be able to contact each other anytime. But in this ancient time, manual labor is needed to send letters, and it's only something available to people of a certain standing. After meeting once, they usually will not have the chance to meet again. That's why when the Baiyi lady Yiniang saw him, she ran after him to find an opportunity to have some fun. Or else their fate may just be the end. It's the same with these palace maids. It's not that Xiang Shaolong does not want to satisfy them, but one Lady Ya is more than enough for him to handle, so how can he help the other women?

When he was bathing in the luxurious bath, all the eight palace maids in Lady Ya's palace came out in full force, all stripped naked to serve him in the pool and to massage his body. For someone so flirtatious like Xiang Shaolong, he dared not overstep the boundaries this time, afraid that he will not be able to handle the outcome of the situation. The maids keep pouring boiling water into the pool and the hot steam rose, making the bathroom like an enclosed sauna. Chunying and the rest of the maids have helped him bath before, but they at least wore something, not like these palace maids who were totally undressed. Obviously life in the palace is a lot more licentious and ridiculous than the world outside.

But undeniably, Xiang Shaolong is thoroughly enjoying

himself right now and totally relaxed. He's relieved that without his initiation, these eight beautiful, heated women all dared not be overly enticing with him. But it's unavoidable that they are using the opportunity to use their bodies to bump and rub against him. The Zhao people has never seen someone with Xiang Shaolong's looks and physique.

After the bath, Xiang Shaolong laid on a bed next to the pool and allowed eight pairs of dainty hands to apply fragrant oils on him and massage him, making him so comfortable he can't even keep his eyes open. With a life like this, what else can a man ask for.

Footsteps were heard, Lady Ya came next to the bed and helped him sit up, reaching out her hand to touch his dark and thick shoulder-length hair and said with a smile, "They are maids I chose specially from my residence, and all are smart, obedient and pretty. They, as well as me, will be serving you during the journey. Give them a little something to satisfy them! They will work even harder!"

The faces of the eight ladies blushed and they lowered their head and smiled shyly. Anyone could have seen that they are extremely willing, praying for it in fact. Xiang Shaolong almost wanted to give Lady Ya a good smacking on her bottom. Maybe giving free reins to lust is a common and normal occurrence in the palace, but the military training he received has taught him the importance and need for self-control. He mumbled a reply and pretended to fall asleep. What else can he do? Lady Ya lowered her head and

whispered in his ear, "You just have to lie down and enjoy, you don't even have to lift a finger."

Xiang Shaolong secretly lamented that won't he become a sex toy for the eight women instead. He could not accept this so he did not reply her and fell asleep after a while.

When he woke up, it was quiet. Lamps had been lighted in the bath and the surroundings were serene. He thought that all the women had left and was just getting up when a dainty voice cried out, "Master is awake!"

Two pretty maids immediately came over to help him dress. Xiang Shaolong saw the longing and hope on the two women's face and he asked, "What are elder sisters' names."

The extremely voluptuous one giggled and said, "Master you are making us feel bad, I am Xiao Zhao; she is Xiaomei. We're both Lady's personal maids."

Xiaomei complimented, "Master has really good physique. We have never served any men who is more well built than you."

By then Xiao Zhao had came up to him to help him with the complicated buttons, her bosom heaving. Xiang Shaolong is after all used to flirting, so he can't help but touch her. Xiao Zhao's body trembled and leaned softly on his body, crying softly, "Master!"

Xiaomei plastered her body tightly against his back, her body temperature fiery hot.

Xiang Shaolong might as well hug the two women and after kissing them each on the mouth, asked, "Where is Lady?"

The two women were frightened and hurriedly continued helping him dress. Xiao Zhao said with fear, "I deserve death, Lady has ordered that we bring you to her as soon as you're awake."

Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic, knowing that for now he need not fear being harassed by them to make love, but since he's started, he might as well grope them a little more. Until they were moaning continuously did he follow them out.

Lady Ya was waiting for him quietly at the dining table and when she saw him, she knelt down on the rug and smiling sweetly, welcomed him to his seat like a wife serving her husband. They sat next to each other on one side of the table while the maids continuously served food and wine. Lady Ya poured wine for him and said with a laugh, "After living for so many years, this is the first time Ya'er feels the happiness of a sense of belonging. When I was sitting here waiting for you earlier, I don't feel that time passes terribly at all, there was not an instant of emptiness or boredom because I know you are by my side."

Xiao Zhao and the rest of the maids split into two groups and knelt on both sides of the entrance, eight pairs of eyes kept glancing at Xiang Shaolong. After casting a look at the eight women, Lady Ya said with a hidden smile, "Ya'er belongs to you! So they have also become your personal property, if you're interested, just have fun with them in front of Ya'er."

She covered her mouth and continued, "Xiang Lang is not like other men at all, if it was someone else, Ya'er and the rest of them won't be so neatly dressed anymore."

Xiang Shaolong laughed secretly to himself, when it comes to immorality, a modern man like him who is used to the binds of responsibility and rules really cannot be compared to them. But if he's had too much to drink, he won't know what he will do once he has loosened up under the influence of alcohol.

After Lady Ya waved the eight maids away, she fell into his arms and said, "Imperial brother and Lian Po both regards you highly, and this will surely incur Zhao Mu's wrath. Especially he sent men over earlier to summon me but I rejected him sternly. This will certainly increase his hatred. Although you are of use to him now, he will not show his true colors so soon, but he will ultimately try to set a trap for you, and if anything happens, Imperial brother will certainly help him and not you."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that he will not let him off either. How can he when he thinks of Shu'er's death. Lady Ya saw his expression darkened and thought that he was worried about Zhao Mu, so she said, "Zhao Mu has two lackeys under him, one is the physician Guo Kai, the other is General Le Cheng, one a scholar and one a warrior, but they are both formidable and devious people. They're not in Handan right now, but if you meet them in future, you must deal with them carefully."

Xiang Shaolong remembered Emperor Qin and hurried ask, "What is the heir of the state of Qin, Ying Zheng like?"

Lady Ya looked unhappy and said coldly, "This person is good looking, and taller and bigger than the average Qin person, but he's as timid as a mouse, afraid of everything. It'll be difficult for him to have any great accomplishments, and he only knows how to enjoy himself with women all day."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed hoarsely, "What? How can he be such a person?"

Lady Ya straightened up and asked curiously, "Why do you seem to be so interested in him?"

Xiang Shaolong's mind was in a mess, Emperor Qin has always been his hope and dream. No matter what, he is still a soldier loyal to his country, so naturally he felt loyalty towards this great conqueror who created China with his hands. But if Emperor Qin is a person who is only interested in women and will not have much accomplishment, won't he have lost his only hope and goal.

But history would not be so ridiculously wrong. It must be because Emperor Qin is trying to lie to the Zhaos and pretended to be like that. Yes! That must be it. Once he thought of this explanation, he relaxed and replied, "The state of Qin is so strong now, that's why I am especially interested in them!"

Lady Ya's suspicions were not aroused and said, "The Qins are the most barbaric. Only they can murder thousands of soldiers, and treat women ruthlessly and raped them, so

everyone is afraid once they hear the Qin soldiers are coming. They would rather die than end up in their hands.”

Xiang Shaolong can't help but ask, “Is Ying Zheng strong physically?”

Lady Ya reached out and touched his broad chest and said with a flirtatious smile, “He's a long shot away compared to you. If someone were to tell me that he just died, I would not be surprised at all. For someone like him who keeps having fun with women all the time, it's a miracle he can survive until now. He starts panting after climbing just a few steps of stairs.”

She continued with a sigh, “But the blame is not entirely his. Firstly, his mother Zhao Ji dotes on him overly. The worst thing is that Zhao Mu and his men deliberately lured him into indulging in wine and women, teaching him to drink and be merry at the age of 11, and kept on sending him beauties from the various states. How can an innocent child resist all these.”

This time Xiang Shaolong was really dumbfounded. Something like health can never be faked. Could it be that history is wrong, Ying Zheng is not Emperor Qin.

Because of this his mood was greatly affected. He drank from Lady Ya's hands three cups of strong wine successively, and also made Lady Ya drink a few cups. Lady Ya could not handle the stimulation of the alcohol and started to flirt. Xiang Shaolong's mind is in a mess, so he can only use excitement to numb himself. He summoned the eight ladies

in and made all of them drink and be merry. He finally learnt what the royalty in Zhao did, and spent the most outrageous night, until he can't even remember who he had intercourse with. Without Emperor Qin, would he have to stay like this in Zhao forever. Even if he can handle the conniving Zhao Mu's traps, he'd still be killed by the Qin soldiers sooner or later! Since he obviously knows his future will be thus, how can he be happy today? At this point in time he glimpsed a little understanding as to why the royalty of the various states are wasting their lives like there's tomorrow. Because no one knows if they will still have all their possessions tomorrow.

When he woke up the next day, he was energetic and lively, making Lady Ya and the other ladies who still needed their rest surprised at him. Xiang Shaolong secretly reprimanded himself for being so outrageous. He decided not to think about Emperor Qin first. After washing up, he went to one of the practice fields in the palace to train on his horse riding and archery. The other imperial soldiers were all in awe of him and were respectful. Of course, they wouldn't dare to show it even if they're unhappy with him, because everyone knows that he is now a popular person with the King of Zhao. His immediate superior, the Chief of Imperial Guards Zhao Fang came personally to bring him around the palace, explaining the rules and things to note, saying, "Our job is mainly to be responsible for the safety of the interior and exterior of the two palaces. The outer palace has four halls, nine buildings and 10 pavilions, it's where his majesty receive his officials and work. The inner palace is separated

into three portions, the main palace is the residence of his majesty and his concubines. The western palace is used to receive foreign emissaries while the eastern palace is the residence of the royalty. For now Shaolong can take a walk around, once you're familiar with the surroundings, I will further explain to you the roles and responsibilities."

Xiang Shaolong knows that he is not aware that he'll be leaving on a trip soon, but did not correct him. Right at this time the internal officer Ji Guang came to look for him and took him away to try on the armor made for him.

The armor is mainly to protect the chest and back, with belts intertwined at the shoulders, back and waist. It has a cape that looks like wings behind, and after he wore it everyone's eyes gleamed. It's the first time they have seen a person like him who looks like a heavenly warrior. The 10 over female workers in the armor room stared at him. Xiang Shaolong is already used to being stared at by women, and secretly laughed to himself that in the past, he was the one looking at women but now it's women who are looking at him. This should be considered the world is changing, changing from the modern to the ancient era. He wore the helmet, on it's tip there are two pieces of half curved armor joined together to become a round shaped top, followed by a rectangular armor with rounded edges weaved from the top, and there's altogether seven layers, the top layer pressing on the bottom layer. The shape of the armor protecting the forehead is more unique, fitting the shape of the face. The armor piece right in the middle of the forehead stretched

straight down, protecting the protruding part between the brows. Maybe they're afraid of being beheaded from the back, so the protection at the back of the neck is stronger. After wearing this imperial protector's uniform, he thought it was fun and hurriedly walked out to patrol the area.

Another warrior of the same rank, Cheng Xu volunteered himself to walk with him. They came to the building at the entrance of the main palace and after introducing Xiang Shaolong to the 10 odd guards there, he pulled him aside and said, "We're all brothers now, there are some things I must tell you. Never go into the main palace alone, the more people accompanying you the better."

Xiang Shaolong was surprised and pressed for the reason.

Cheng Wei whispered, "Besides the servants in the main palace, the number of concubines and maids exceed 500, and they can be capable of anything when they're bored. A robust and muscular man like you, they would not let you out once they see you, and that is no laughing matter."

Xiang Shaolong heaved a breath of relief, so that's what it's all about. He furrowed his brows and asked, "His Majesty does not bother about such matters?"

Cheng Wei smiled bitterly with a hidden meaning, "His Majesty doesn't even have time to bother with his own concubines, he won't even bother about these matters. It's better if one has family in the city, they can use the excuse of going home for a visit and take the opportunity to find someone for some fun. But ladies sent by other states are

not even allowed to step out of the palace gates, so once they see men they will devour them.”

Naturally Xiang Shaolong understands his meaning, the King of Zhao is not interested in women at all. He remembered Lady Ya’s eight maids, and thought that they may be considered very gentle and refined. After chatting a little longer, he slipped back into Lady Ya’s palace.

He’d just stepped into the boundaries of the eastern palace when two pretty palace maids ran after him, and kneeling down, said, “We have been waiting for Imperial Protector for more than half a day, Lady Ni would like to seek the audience of Imperial Protector.”

Xiang Shaolong was in a fix, although Cheng Wei had warned him, he thought that the only dangerous area is the main palace, but he did not expect that the eastern palace is not a safe place either. He hardened his heart and said, “Hai! Please convey my apologies to Lady Ni, I have something important and am in a hurry to meet Lady Ya...”

He walked as he spoke and hurriedly escaped. The two palace maids wanted to run after him but he is already a long distance away. Naturally on the way he met quite a few royal ladies, and seeing their flirtatious look, Xiang Shaolong was so frightened that he kept his eyes straight. Only when he reached the boundaries of Lady Ya’s palace did he heave a sigh of relief.

He had just stepped into the hall when he was received by two of the pretty maids who helped him remove his armor.

Xiang Shaolong forgot their names and asked, "What are elder sisters' names?"

The two women had fun with him the whole of last night and knows that he's an easy-going person. One of them rolled her eyes at him and pouted, "Master only remembers Xiao Zhao and Xiaomei, I've already given you my body and yet you do not remember my name."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that he's not even sure if he had any intercourse with her, so how could he possibly remember her name. He reached out his hand and patted her plumb bottom, asking with a laugh, "Satisfied last night?"

The two girls nodded their heads shyly. Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic, secretly thinking that maybe in his muddle headed state he broke Tao Fang's record of seven women, and thought that he's really quite good. It's just that he never had the chance to try in the past!

The other woman replied, "She's Xiaozi, I'm Xiaoyu. Master, do not forget."

After Xiang Shaolong repeated their names twice, he asked, "Where is Lady?"

Xiaoyu replied, "Lady is personally cooking for Master."

Xiaozi smiled, "We've served Lady for so many years, it's the first time we saw her do this."

Xiang Shaolong thought that the food she comes out with would surely taste horrible. But he was touched, and when

he thought of his wife and maids in the Wu family, he missed them. While he had women to accompany him here, they are all alone in an empty room, which is really unfair.

Xiaoyu lowered her voice and said, "Third Princess came to visit Lady, she's in the kitchen now as well. Besides Lady Ya, she's the prettiest in the palace."

Xiang Shaolong was stunned. These palace ladies would really do anything for a man, and she actually came here to look for him.

He had no choice but to follow the two maids into the kitchen. He had just walked into the inner hall when Lady Ya and another beauty dressed in palace robes came out from the kitchen and came face to face with him. Xiang Shaolong's eyes met with that beauty who cannot be any older than 17, and both pairs of eyes shone at the same time. This Third Princess looks very regal and dainty. Although she does not have Lady Ya's devilish body, but she's well proportioned and her movements graceful, like a precious flower, emitting an enchanting air amidst her quietness. When she saw Xiang Shaolong, she revealed a pretty smile, her expressive eyes seems to be greeting him. The sleeves of her clothes are very wide, dragging onto the ground, an exquisite and large shawl hung on her shoulders. Her hairstyle was exquisite and unique, with two string of flowers made from pearls and silk hanging down the side of her hair, making her look especially dainty and exquisite. A curved comb decorated the front of her hair, with three hairpieces on both her left and right sides, and in the middle

of her forehead she dotted a red beauty spot.

What made Xiang Shaolong's eyes brighten is that she's not the one he expected her to be. She was lively and sharp, with a captivating untainted, regal air about her. Standing next to the extremely beautiful Lady Ya, they look like the spring orchid and autumn chrysanthemum, each having its strong points. When she noticed Xiang Shaolong staring at her, her pretty face blushed and she lowered her head, but there was no look of unhappiness at all. The healthy fragrance of a young woman wafted into his nose and Xiang Shaolong can't help but take a deep breath.

After Lady Ya rolled her eyes at him, she introduced the two of them. Xiang Shaolong hurriedly paid his respects to this royalty. After Lady Ya invited Third Princess into the inner hall for a seat, she pulled Xiang Shaolong aside and whispered, "No matter how interested Zhao Qian seems to be in you, you must not destroy her virtue. Because this time she will follow the group and marry into the state of Wei to become the first wife of the Crown Prince. If the Weis find out that she's not intact, they will reject her and you'll be in great trouble then."

Xiang Shaolong felt that it's really a pity. It doesn't matter how many beauties he's had, he still felt that this is an earth shattering pity.

Lady Ya accompanied Xiang Shaolong into the hall and the Third Princess stood up, and avoiding Xiang Shaolong's eyes, said quietly, "Lady, Zhao Qian is going back."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, it's good that they meet less as well, or else it'd be terrible if they can't bear with each other. This Zhao Qian gives one the feeling of being quiet but with good upbringing and inner beauty.

Lady Ya did not try to keep her, but just sent her straight to the door. When she returned she said with a smile, "Xiang Lang's charm is really irresistible to us women, even Zhao Qian is not spared and she quickly ran away because of this. I really want to see if you have the ability to deal with the most famous beauty in Wei, Shi Cainu. (Shi = stone or rock, Cainu = talented woman)."

Xiang Shaolong was perplexed, "Shi Cainu?"

Lady Ya pulled him to the seat and leaned over, putting her arms around his neck and said coquettishly, "Don't think that her family name is Shi. It's just that she's extremely talented, having shocked the scholarly world at the age of 16. Although her beauty is enough to fell a country, but she's never impressed with any men. She's 20 this year yet she refuses to marry. She has rejected all the famous young masters seeking her favor from the various states. That's why it's rumored that she is a stone woman borne from heaven, and will not fall for any man."

The more difficult it is to obtain an item, the more precious it becomes, this has always been the case since ancient times. Xiang Shaolong's interest was piqued and he asked, "Even if she's unwilling to marry, but can she decide on this matter?"

Lady Ya laughed, "Tempted? She and the famous Qin beauty Widow Qing each have their ways. They're famous for being able to maintain their chastity. Shi Cainu was able to keep herself safe because no one can be compared to her zither and scholarly skills, anyone who sees her will feel inferior. That's why the King of Wei and Prince Xinling protects her. With these two huge mountains backing her, who would dare to force their way."

She continued with a smile, "Xiang Lang's writing skills is unparalleled in the world, maybe you'll have a chance to move her."

Xiang Shaolong secretly lamented his guilt and changed the topic, telling her about Lady Ni's intention to meet him.

Lady Ya was stunned and sat up straight, looking at him unbelievably and said, "She will look for a man as well?"

Xiang Shaolong said with embarrassment, "Or maybe I misunderstood her intentions."

Lady Ya replied, "How can this be a misunderstanding. I think that this beauty after having kept herself chaste for her husband for nine years, is finally feeling restless. Hai! It's all your fault. You were so manly the other day at the duel, who would not fall for you. It's just unimaginable that for someone so cultivated like Lady Ni, is no exception as well. She's also the only one who will be bold enough to fight with me for you, because she is Imperial Brother's most respected cousin, and I am her most favored sister."

She added with a coquettish smile, "Do you need me to help

you spend a night with her, or maybe the both of us will accompany you?"

Xiang Shaolong shook his head guardedly, "I don't even know if she's tall, short, fat or thin. What if you lied to me out of love and respect for her, then won't I become a free gigolo."

Lady Ya was not familiar with his modern words 'free gigolo', and after thinking for a while, she chortled, leaning on his shoulder and panting, said "Ai! My imperial protector, how can I dare to lie to you? Won't I be afraid of being reprimanded? Do you want me to take you there and check the goods out first? I also want to see her when she abandons her troubles."

Xiang Shaolong felt this was very inappropriate and said seriously, "Don't be ridiculous, if you make use of me to make Lady Ni embarrassed, I will not let you off."

Lady Ya sat up straight and said aggrievedly, "I just wanted you to have more opportunities for fun before you leave for Wei!"

Xiang Shaolong reached out and embraced her shoulder, giving her a very flirtatious and long kiss, and when Lady Ya totally melted, he said gently, "Don't think that I am the same as other men, who will not be happy without beauties. I need to conserve my energy to do a good job for the journey to Wei, understand?"

Lady Ya has become all languid from his kisses, and she mumbled her agreement while still lost in her senses. She

snuggled into his arms, lying on his muscular chest. Right at this time Xiao Zhao came to report that someone from the Wu family is looking for him. Xiang Shaolong stood up and Lady Ya immediately sat up and said, "I'm sorry, but I have been ordered by Imperial brother that I must listen in at the side."

She added with a smile, "But of course I will not reveal anything!"

Xiang Shaolong shrugged his shoulders, showing that he couldn't care less. That beautiful move was enough to make Lady Ya and Xiao Zhao's eyes gleam, before they walked out.

In actual fact his speech and movements are very different from the people of this era, and this gave him exceptional charm and debonair. It's not a coincidence that the more handsome Lian Jin would actual lose to him so badly in the battle of love.

He had just stepped into the hall when a fiery ball accompanied by a sweet fragrance ran into his arms and started crying. Of course it is the Wu family's beauty Miss Tingfang.

Tao Fang stood in the middle of the hall and made a helpless action. There were two other warriors who were carrying his wooden sword and clothes. Lady Ya came next to the helpless Xiang Shaolong, reached out her hand to caress Wu Tingfang's pretty hair, went to her ear and whispered something. These words are more effective than any miracle pills to stop crying.

Wu Tingfang immediately stopped her wails and lifted her pretty face to Xiang Shaolong, her teary eyes looking at Lady Ya and exclaimed, "Really!"

Lady Ya nodded her head, and holding this pretty and dainty thing, took her into the inner hall. Of course Xiang Shaolong has no idea what Lady Ya said, but he guessed that in order to live in harmony in future, Zhao Ya will naturally try to stay on Wu Tingfang's good side. Anyone will know that if there are jealous fights, he will definitely stand on Wu Tingfang's side.

Tao Fang instructed the warriors to put down the wooden sword and clothes and to leave the room. He gave Xiang Shaolong a questioning look and Xiang Shaolong hurriedly told him about his trip to Wei.

Tao Fang's brows furrowed deeply when he heard that and said softly, "Prince Xinling is exceptionally smart and has countless able men under him, he's not someone easy to deal with. You have to be careful."

He paused and continued, "We have our own people in Wei as well. I'll go back and make some arrangements to see how we can help you."

After they've agreed on the secret signal for the meeting, Lady Ya and a happy Wu Tingfang came out. Wu Tingfang waid with a smile, "Master Tao can go back on your own, and tell Sister Ting not to worry. Fang'er will stay here and take care of Xiang Lang."

It was as if a huge load was taken off his shoulder and after

thanking Lady Ya, Tao Fang left happily. Obviously Wu Tingfang had been harassing him. Xiang Shaolong's mood was greatly improved, naturally that night they were all engaged in loving acts, sandwiched between the two beauties Zhao Ya and Wu Tingfang, spending the warm and beautiful night together.

The next morning, with the help of Xiao Zhao, he changed into his armor and helmet and went to the practice fields in high spirits to practice his horse riding and archery. The other imperial guards treated him like their new heroic idol, and because he has no airs about him, he's on good relations with everyone. While he was galloping on his horse and he managed to shoot at the bull's eyes at the same time, the field erupted in cheers. Suddenly everyone knelt down and when Xiang Shaolong looked, he hurriedly scrambled off his horse and knelt down as well. It turns out that the King of Zhao is here, and next to him was a pretty young lady, with eyebrows like the spring mountains and eyes like autumn's water, clear and bright. However her composure was regal, with a noble air around her that will not tolerate any audacity. She is certainly different from Lady Ya's flirtatious nature.

After the King of Zhao supervised the men with their training, he summoned Xiang Shaolong and said happily, "Shaolong is practicing so diligently, I am much assured."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that he's practicing so hard not because of you, but because his own life is at stake, but of course he won't say that out.

The King of Zhao said, "Come! Pay your respects to Lady Ni! She has a request to make of you!"

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly paid his respects to Lady Ni, and by now he realizes that he has really misunderstood her. Such a regal lady, how can she possibly try to lure men publicly?

The King of Zhao added, "Lady Ni told me that Shaolong had rejected her invitation once. Initially I was unhappy when I heard it, but I later guessed that Shaolong may have misunderstood Lady's meaning, and thought it's regarding matters between men and women. There's no guilt in being ignorant, and I can see that for the sake of the mission, Shaolong is controlling yourself very well. Therefore not only will I not blame you, but I am very impressed with you."

Xiang Shaolong secretly felt guilty and thought to himself that if he'd known that he rejected Lady Ni's invitation because his stamina is limited and he could not handle so many beauties, and also he does not know if Lady Ni is pretty or if her figure is good, would he still think the same. But on the surface he naturally sought forgiveness fearfully.

The King of Zhao smiled at Lady Ni and said, "I'll hand Shaolong over to you for now!"

And he left with the accompaniment of the imperial guards.

Xiang Shaolong turned towards Lady Ni and she happened to be eyeing him. Their eyes locked and Lady Ni's pretty face blushed and she lowered her eyes and said gently, "Zhao Ni was rash, causing Mister to have the misunderstanding."

Xiang Shaolong saw that her skin was smooth and clear, and although she's not as pretty as Zhao Ya, not as dainty as Wu Tingfang and not as fresh as Third Princess Zhao Qian, but she has another kind of alluring beauty catches one's attention. And at this time he almost wished that it was not a misunderstanding.

Lady Ni said, "There's too many people here, would Mister please come to Zhao Ni's residence for a chat, and meet my son."

Xiang Shaolong thought that this matter must certainly involve her son. All the women in this era marry early, for all you know Lady Ni got married when she was 13 or 14. So although she looks like in her 20s, it's nothing strange if she has a 10 year old son. A horse carriage came over and Lady Ni went into the carriage. Xiang Shaolong is aware of the difference in status so he went up his horse and followed behind the carriage.

In a short while they reached the place where the two palace maids waited the other day to invite him. The carriage turned into a courtyard. They sat down in the hall while four maids served them.

Lady Ni was a little distracted and after drinking a few sips of hot tea did she dared to look at him. She said quietly, "I've invited Mister here today because I have a request."

Xiang Shaolong saw that she dared not address him by his official title, but addressed him respectfully as Mister, and had already made his guess. He looked at her pretty eyes

and asked with a smile, "Has it got something to do with Little Master?"

Lady Ni sighed, "It's all because of this son. After my late husband perished in battle, all my hopes have been placed on him, but he's stubborn by nature and does not know how to take care of himself, only interested in having fun all the time..."

Xiang Shaolong smiled, "Don't all children like to play?"

Lady Ni's face blushed and she said worriedly, "He does not play a typical child's games, but has fun with the girls in the Palace."

Xiang Shaolong asked hoarsely, "How old is he?"

Lady Ni said embarrassingly, "He'll be 14 end of the year."

Looking at the dumbstruck Xiang Shaolong, she said helplessly, "I have found him many famous teachers to teach him, but none can do anything to him. He'll disappear in the blink of an eye. He's only a little afraid of me, but all the servants around me are afraid of him, he... Hai! I don't know what to say. Ai! The tea has turned cold."

Xiang Shaolong was about to drink tea when a woman's scream could be heard coming from the backyard. Lady Ni's expression turned somber and she stood up and walked hurriedly towards the direction of the sound. Xiang Shaolong was afraid that she'll be in danger and hurriedly went after her. He had just stepped into the room when he saw a stout looking boy pressing a pretty maid against the wall, her top

pulled down, revealing her voluptuous chest. That boy was holding onto her hands tightly, his tiny mouth biting and sucking on her right breast, not caring if there are other people nearby. Although there were three maids at the side, no one dared to stop him.

Lady Ni was furious and shouted, “Beast! Stop your hands right now!”

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that it’s more accurate say stop his mouth. That Little Master was shocked and released the pretty maid. He turned around and said nonchalantly, “Didn’t Mother went to look for his Majesty? It was Young Prince who told me.”

After he spoke he turned his gaze to Xiang Shaolong, his look full of jeer and disrespect. The pretty maid went away crying with her clothes in disarray. Lady Ni was so furious she was speechless.

Xiang Shaolong wondered why she was able to hold back her tears. At the same time he realized that this kid learned martial arts since young and is strong. He’s also on good terms with the Zhao prince, so naturally he does not fear anyone, and no one can or dares to discipline him. At such a young age and already he’s stained with the lecherous nature of the palace, what a pity.

The Little Master looked at Xiang Shaolong from the corner of his eye and huffed, “So you are that Xiang Shaolong, why you aren’t kneeling upon seeing me.”

Lady Ni roared, “Outrageous! From today onwards Mister

Xiang will be your teacher, you should be the one kneeling.”

The Little Master chortled and said, “This is where Mother is wrong, how the formalities between a ruler and a subject can be dismissed. After he’s paid his respects, I still have to see how capable he is before I decide if I want him to teach me.”

Lady Ni was so furious she stamped her feet and was about to berate him when Xiang Shaolong said with a smile, “Lady, please do not be upset, why don’t all of you leave for a moment and let me have some heart to heart talk with Little Master.”

The Little Master saw that Xiang Shaolong was all decked out in his armor and looked imposing and actually felt a little afraid. He smiled icily and said, “Who wants to talk to you.”

He turned around and wanted to slip away from the back door, ignoring even Lady Ni’s calls. He was about to slip out when there was a gust of wind and the Little Master felt a coldness brush past his ear, a dagger flew past his cheek and embedded itself on the doorframe. Little Master’s legs weakened and he stopped.

Lady Ni and the rest of the maids were all startled, their hands covering their mouths, thinking that if the dagger is a little way off, what would be the outcome?

Little Master turned around pale faced, pointing at Xiang Shaolong and stammered, “Mother! He wants to kill me, apprehend him quickly.”

Xiang Shaolong stared icily at him and said coldly, "What kind of capability is that, shut up immediately. When I come tomorrow morning and I don't see you waiting at the study obediently, I'll find you and give you a good thrashing no matter where you hide. Now go!"

Little Master was so furious his face paled. He stamped his feet angrily and pointed at him hatefully, saying, "Fine! We shall see!"

He turned around and went out the back door in the blink of an eye.

Xiang Shaolong is not bothered about a little lad like him at all, and took the opportunity to bid his farewell to Lady Ni.

Lady Ni lowered her head and said quietly, "You have not drank that tea!"

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself if the beauty is tempted. He smiled suavely and went to the door to retrieve the dagger Tao Fang gave him. He had an idea. When it comes to archery, there are a lot of people who are better than him, but what about flying daggers? There's no one better than him. But it's not convenient to carry daggers, but if he were to use the five inch steel nails he had used while in the special task force, he can easily carry a few hundred with him and it's even more deadly. He made up his mind and decided to ask Guo Zhong's men to make it immediately. He turned around and Lady Ni had just walked up behind him. The two came face to face in close distance, their eyes locked. Lady Ni uttered in alarm and moved two steps back,

a little helpless. The most alluring thing to a man is when a chaste and mature beauty first feel the stirrings of her feelings. Xiang Shaolong is no exception, if not for the fact that there are other maids around, he'll certainly flirt with her. But it's not because he is deviously trying to lure her into bed, but he just wants to see her alluring, helpless look.

Lady Ni said, "Mister, this way!"

Xiang Shaolong followed her back to the front hall and after drinking the hot tea that she personally changed for him, bid his farewell again. Lady Ni felt a real respect for him. All the men she's ever met, besides close blood relatives like the King, all of them had designs on her once they see her. On one hand they love her beautiful body, and on the other hand they want to boast that they were able to conquer this chaste widow. She detests those lecherous faces, and only this heroic looking man in front of her cannot make her feel any loathing at all. The way he threw that dagger earlier, full of confidence and strength, is enough to touch her calm heart who has been sick of the opposite sex for so long.

Lady Ni can find no further excuse to retain him, and she personally sent him to the door, looking at him deeply and lightly sighed, "Mister please remember to come here early tomorrow, I will leave my little Pan'er to you."

Xiang Shaolong almost blurted out, "What about you?" but of course he dared not be so rude. He gave a small smile and said, "The way I teach children will not be like what you imagine. I hope Lady will be able to accept that, or you may

fire me from my post any time.”

Lady Ni said gladly, “As long as it’s Mister’s methods, I will accept them all. Ai! I was too anxious, and forgot to ask you the question about salary.”

Xiang Shaolong chortled and walked out the door, his voice drifting back, “I’m doing this because of a mother’s love for her son. That would be my reward.”

CHAPTER 8
The Empress Of Zhao
[Translated by JEAN]

WHEN he returned to the Palace, Wu Tingfang was overjoyed and after grumbling for a bit, she dragged him to the pavilion in the garden for some sweet talk.

A moment later Lady Ya returned with a shocking news. King Xiaowen of Qin who has ascended the throne for less than three days suddenly died, and Ying Zheng's father has taken over the throne as King Zhuangxiang.

Lady Ya said, "King Xiaowen is 53 years old this year, and has always been weak, but this time he died after eating the

medicine offered by Lu Buwei, so everyone suspects that Lu Buwei has secretly done something. But because of the relationship between King Zhuangxiang and Lu Buwei, no one dares to say anything although they're upset. Hai! This Lu Buwei is extremely ambitious, and his methods vicious and excellent. Now all the other states are afraid that the Qin army will start to invade east very quickly."

Xiang Shaolong was surprised and overjoyed at the news, and thought that the events are really similar to what was depicted in the movie. However he knows that the most important task for Lu Buwei now is not to attack the other six states, but to find a way to get his precious son Ying Zheng back to Xianyang, then think of a way to murder King Zhuangxiang. In that way the throne will fall into the hands of his son, and he will become in a sense the Grand Emperor.

Lady Ya continued, "Lu Buwei has been a merchant for many years and traveled among the states, so he's very familiar with the situation in all the states. If he were to come to power, the outcome will be terrible. Merchants only care about gains and not loyalty, and are not bounded by loyalty. The thought of a person like that governing the expansion is enough to make one's blood run cold."

Xiang Shaolong was thinking about Ying Zheng instead. All along, historians did not understand that when his father Yiren and Lu Buwei escaped Handan, they left behind Zhao Ji and Ying Zheng to avoid arousing suspicions, but why didn't that Zhao's kill Ying Zheng and his mother to appease their anger.

Now he understood, that is Zhao Mu's ploy, deliberately thinning Ying Zheng's mind with wine and beauty, making him a useless person. They can then use him to make deals with the Qin in future, and even if he becomes the King, a useless person like him will be more bane than boon to the Qins. Killing two birds with one stone, the ploy is indeed vicious. It seems that Zhao Mu has now succeeded, so how can Emperor Qin unify the six states then?

He really has no idea.

But if he does not see Emperor Qin, he will never give up.

It's not difficult to imagine that now that Yiren has ascended the throne to become the Qin King, the value of Ying Zheng who is now the crown prince will rise. Now that he's a rare treasure, the Zhaos will certainly guard him even more closely, so how can he possibly meet him without arousing others' suspicions?

Wu Tingfang came up to him and asked, "What is Xiang Lang thinking about?"

Xiang Shaolong was jolted awake and on seeing Lady Ya's heated eyes staring at him, he changed the subject and asked, "Who is the Premier in Qin now? What's the situation like?"

Lady Ya sighed, "It doesn't matter who is in power. The position of Premier will end up in Lu Buwei's hands sooner or later."

Wu Tingfang asked curiously, "Why is Sister Ya so afraid of

the Qins?”

Lady Ya replied helplessly, “It’s not that I’m afraid of them, but there’s no one who is not afraid of them. You can see clearly from our state, who is not engaged in amorous acts, wine and beauty. When the enemy soldiers are nearing the city, they’ll pull themselves together for a while and once the enemy is defeated, they’ll return to their old ways. However the Qins still maintain the hard working nature of the barbarians and were not influenced by the ways of the southern people. Shang Yang advised the Qins to prohibit philosophy books and the country will then prosper and strengthen. Although I do not know who is right or wrong, but seeing the Qins growing stronger day by day, who can say that it’s wrong of the Qins to prohibit philosophy books.”

Only now did Xiang Shaolong realize that before Emperor Qin burned books and buried Confucian scholars, Shang Yang has already done this long ago, burning the books first.

Lady Ya added, “Before Fan Ju became the premier, the main power in Qin was in the hands of the Marquis of Rang, and those in power were people under him. He used the strategy of attacking the far away states but maintaining friendship with nearby states, thus making the Qin’s commanders frequently travel far away to fight battles, depleting the country’s strength. King Zhaoxiang therefore made plans secretly with Fan Ju to take back military control, and changed the strategy to attacking the nearby states but maintaining friendship with far away states. They made peace with Qi and Chu, and used all their might to deal with

Han and us, therefore the Changping battle happened. And Imperial brother made the wrong move as well, hai!”

Xiang Shaolong saw the look of sadness in her eyes, and knows that she is now thinking of the Zhao Kuo who can only talk strategy and lost his life in Changping. He felt a great pity for her so he hugged and kissed her, saying gently, “Let bygones be bygones, don’t think too much.”

Zhao Ya leaned into his arms weakly, “After the Marquis of Rang lost his power, one of his great generals Bai Qi was never on good terms with Fan Ju. In the battle of Changping, Bai Qi destroyed 400,000 of our men, his methods were never more cruel. Therefore Fan Ju made a big issue out of this and in the end managed to convince the Qin King to execute Bai Qi’s entire clan. This move resulted in the hatred of Qin’s generals towards an outsider like Fan Ju, and finally it’s now Cai Ze of Yan who is now the Premier. But Lu Buwei is riding on a high tide now, and the good days for Cai Ze will soon be over.”

Xiang Shaolong felt his joy run dry on hearing this, and felt that the future is bleak. In this era, everyone will murder if it can benefit himself. He hugged the two women and said, “Hai! Don’t think anymore. We’ll drink and be merry today, and leave all worries to tomorrow. Come! Let’s go into the room immediately and have fun.”

The two women’s pretty eyes shone and they repeated, “Drink and be merry today, and leave all worries to tomorrow. Well said, Xiang Lang.”

They followed him obediently, their powered face burning.

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought to himself, how can he be bothered about what's going to happen tomorrow? He only knows how to fight and knows nothing about politics, it's a silly dream if he wants to change this era. Why not have fun instead, enjoy each beauty as they come. That would be more practical. Who knows if he'll still be alive tomorrow, or if he'll still be in this era?

He can't help but think of the regal and elegant Zhao Ni.

Let's see if he'll have a chance to flirt with the lady tomorrow. That would certainly be a captivating experience and would not have put his journey here to waste.

As for whether he can still return to the 21st century, he doesn't really care anymore.

Xiang Shaolong woke up before the sun rose, changed into his military uniform but without wearing his armor, left for the practice field to practice his horse riding and archery.

From now on he's not going to think about the future, but only wants to spend his time enjoying life to the fullest.

The many years of habit made him like exercising, therefore his stamina is better than others. The amorous night he spent did not affect him much. Instead, if he doesn't exercise, he'll feel uncomfortable instead.

He humbly sought advice from the other imperial guards the various techniques of controlling a horse, therefore he improved by leaps and bounds. He was able to turn and flip

at ease on horseback and execute various difficult moves. He also practiced hard on charging in battle. It's just that he's not too used to fighting a battle on a horse wearing heavy armor.

After a hard practice, he let Cheng Xu take him to the soldiers quarters assigned to him and after his shower, went to Lady Ni's residence. Just as he was thinking how he should flirt with this beauty when he suddenly heard someone calling him.

Xiang Shaolong looked over in surprise and saw Lady Ni's mischievous and lecherous son waving to him from a building on the left.

He obviously knows that it won't be anything good but he's not afraid at all and walked over with large strides.

The Little Master dashed into the building.

Xiang Shaolong secretly laughed to himself and heightened his senses. He had just stepped into the courtyard when there was a 'whoosh' and a huge net dropped down from above.

Xiang Shaolong laughed and rolled forward, avoiding the net and jumped up as if nothing happened, tapping the dust and grass off his clothes.

In the spacious courtyard 10 odd people holding swords jumped out from their hiding place and surrounded him. Master Pan was hiding behind a bigger kid who was a head taller than him and shouted, "Beat him up!"

Xiang Shaolong took a look around and wanted to laugh. These 10 odd people were between the ages of 14 to 17, and looks like little bullies in the royal family, and they actually dared to gang up to deal with him.

The bigger kid who was shielding the Little Master could have been Zhao's crown prince, so how can he let him have a chance to reveal his status. He laughed and drew out his rainbow sword and went towards Master Pan.

Two swords hurriedly went up in defense.

Xiang Shaolong gave two heavy blows which stunned his opponents and their swords dropped to the ground, before giving them a kick on their butts. The two spoiled kids groaned as they fell to the ground.

Xiang Shaolong laughed as he waved his sword, slashing any sword that comes forward and kicking any butt that he sees and in a short while he defeated this royal gang. He pretended to roar and frightened this group of teenagers so much that they scattered away in fear.

Naturally he will not let Master Pan off and he flipped him over on the ground and using his sword, slapped his butt more than 10 times before lifting the wailing boy up and said icily, "If you cry one more time, I will give you 10 slaps."

Master Pan has never seen someone so terrible and he immediately shut up.

Xiang Shaolong escorted him home. Lady Ni has long heard about what happened and was at the door waiting.

Once Master Pan sees his mother, he saw that he has backing and started crying again.

Lady Ni's heart ached on seeing this and was about to console him when Xiang Shaolong said loudly, "Lady will either hand him over to me, or I will never interfere in future again."

Lady Ni was startled and she lowered her head and said, "Of course I will hand him over to Mister!"

Xiang Shaolong smiled and said, "That would be best!"

He lifted Master Pan by the scruff of his neck and dragged him into the study, keeping Lady Ni and the rest of the maids outside. He sat down on the soft cushion and grinned at Master Pan who was scrambling to get up from the floor with a look of absolute hatred.

Xiang Shaolong roared, "Sit down!"

Master Pan immediately sat down.

Xiang Shaolong said coldly, "Look! Look at you, you have no ability yourself so you went to look for help, thinking of bullying others by sheer numbers. And you cry and scream when you lose, what kind of a hero is that."

Master Pan gritted his teeth and said, "You're not a hero, the old bullying the young."

Xiang Shaolong humph, "If you're afraid of me, you won't come and find trouble with me on your own accord. You know this is not a question of the old bullying the young, but

a question of who is stronger and who is weaker.”

Master Pan was dumbfounded, he did not expect Xiang Shaolong to be so formidable. He thought for a moment before he tried to scare him by saying, “Just now you kicked Young Prince’s butt, he will certainly tell his Majesty to chop off your head.”

Xiang Shaolong sighed, “I see that you’re so young and yet you know how to flirt with women, and I thought you’re a person of standing. But I did not expect that when you lose to others, you only know how to use despicable methods. I was wrong about you, get lost! I do not want to see you ever again.”

Master Pan eyed him suspiciously and got up. He turned around and was about to leave when he turned back again and asked, “Why is it that when I made fun of these women, you regard me as a person of standing?”

Xiang Shaolong replied nonchalantly, “Most men are lecherous, it doesn’t matter if they’re young or old. When I saw you molesting that sister the other day, you did seem to have a hand with you and I thought your other skills would be good as well. But I did not expect you to be so useless. If you have some spirit in you then you should practice hard to be more capable than me and defeat me properly.”

It’s the first time Master Pan hear an adult admiring his evil ways, so he nodded his head and said, “Just you see! One day I will defeat you.”

Xiang Shaolong knows that he has successfully piqued his

curiosity and thoughts of winning, so he said, "What's the use of just saying it, just scram! I abhor those useless people who only knows how to talk empty. I hope you never have the chance to go to battle, or else it'll not be something so simple as getting a kick on the butt."

Youths have always idolized heroes. Xiang Shaolong is good looking and easily defeated the powerful man in his eyes, so he has long harbored a respect and fear for Xiang Shaolong. Now that Xiang Shaolong's words sounded reasonable to his ears, he can't help but felt his enmity reduce and he sat back down and said, "If I listen to you, will you teach me how you fought earlier?"

Xiang Shaolong's eyes gleamed and he said, "Do you know how valuable my skills are? How can I just teach you just because of a word from your mother? If you want to learn, you'll have to pass a test first."

He continued with a smile, "But if you're obedient, not only can I make you become Zhao's true hero and swordsman, I can also teach you how to become a love expert that will charm all women to death. All the beauties in the world will be yours to pick."

Using both hard and soft tactics, Master Pan's face brightened. Ever since his father passed away, he's always envied others who has a father, and Xiang Shaolong just happen to fit into this emptiness. Naturally he did not realize it himself, but in his heart he actually thirst for someone like Xiang Shaolong to appear.

He was silent for a moment before he ventured to ask, "Really! What kind of test do I need to pass?"

Xiang Shaolong knew that he cannot be slipshod about this matter, so he stood up and helped him up as well.

Just as Master Pan was surprised at the attention given to him, Xiang Shaolong lifted him up and flung him over his shoulder onto the rug, laughing loudly, "First is to get a beating. A person who cannot withstand a beating is not qualified to fight."

Although Master Pan was thrown onto the floor, but he only felt a slight pain and thought that this was fun, so he jumped up.

Xiang Shaolong taught him a few moves of Judo on how to wrestle, and allowed Master Pan to trip him, so his interest was aroused. After a round of wrestling fun, and truly like a child's character, he soon forgot all his hatred and enmity.

Xiang Shaolong tousled his head and said, "Go and look for some other people to try my methods! If you listen to instructions and are obedient, you'll certainly become like me in future, tall and strong with extraordinary abilities."

Master Pan shouted in joy and ran out the door.

Lady Ni who has been waiting outside the door all this while was dumbfounded; she cannot understand why her mischievous son would be so ecstatic?

She stepped into the study and looked dumbly at Xiang Shaolong, not knowing what to say at all.

Xiang Shaolong walked over and closed the door. He went behind her and said with a smile, "If I teach Little Master how to be close with women, what would Lady think?"

Lady Ni's body shook and she turned around abruptly and asked hoarsely, "What?"

She almost knocked into him, but she retreated, and this time it was only a small step back.

Xiang Shaolong said nonchalantly, "Children are all rebellious and curious. The more Lady tries to restrict him, the more he'll want to break the rules. So if we let him know clearly what he is doing, what would be the consequences, what responsibility he'll have to take, he'll learn to control himself instead."

Lady Ni stammered, "But he's only 13!"

Xiang Shaolong asked, "How old was Lady when you got married?"

Lady Ni blushed and she lowered her gaze, "At that time I was only 14."

Xiang Shaolong's heart lurched and he said with a smile, "So! 13 are not considered too young, there are a lot of 15 year old males with wives and mistresses, and this is the case in the Palace as well. If Lady wants to stop him from getting close to women, it would be a very difficult task."

Lady Ni said worriedly, "But I still keep thinking that he's an immature kid. However Mister's way of thinking is indeed astute and unique, I've never heard of anyone else who has

such a thinking.”

Xiang Shaolong took the opportunity to look at her chest, waist and long limbs, thinking to himself that you’ll really know how unique a modern man like me is once you’re in bed.

Lady Ni was just stealing a peep at him and saw his heated eyes roving over her chest and was shocked, “Mister!”

Xiang Shaolong was embarrassed that she noticed his lecherous look and hurriedly took his leave.

Lady Ni wanted to retain him a little longer but she could find no excuse, so she can only send him out the door shyly.

Both of them were feeling guilty so they could feel that secret excitement although no words were spoken.

Xiang Shaolong returned to Lady Ya’s place and was about to have fun with the ladies when the King of Zhao suddenly summoned him, so he left hurriedly.

The guard brought him straight to the inner Palace. Xiang Shaolong remembered Cheng Xu’s warning and asked with furrowed brows, “Isn’t his Majesty working at the Outer Palace?”

The guard was expressionless as he replied, “I am only following orders, and do not know anything else.”

The two of them walked along the wide and long corridors in the palace, meeting ladies-in-waiting and concubines on the way and all of them were making eyes at Xiang Shaolong. All

these ladies were specially chosen, so naturally they're all beauties.

They reached an especially magnificent palace building and after the guard passed him over to two servants, he left.

One of the servants instructed him to remove his sword and any other weapons before leading him into the hall.

He'd just stepped into the hall but Xiang Shaolong knows that something is wrong.

On both sides there were 10 strong, stout men standing. On a raised platform at the end of the hall, a lady with her hair piled high up; wearing a colorful and elegant robe was lounging on a chair covered with soft cushions, looking at him icily.

Sitting next to her was the young prince whose butt he just kicked this morning, and behind them sat seven to eight beauties who looked like concubines, and behind these ladies were 10 odd pretty ladies-in-waiting, but all of them looked unfriendly.

Looking at such a layout, naturally he knows what is happening. He hurriedly knelt down and kowtowed, "Imperial Protector Xiang Shaolong pays his respect to your Majesty."

Empress Zhao does not look older than 30, and looked regal and imposing, with a high nose bridge, showing that she's a person of steely character with a mind of her own.

Naturally she's not as beautiful as Lady Ya, Lady Ni or Third

Princess, but her posture while on the dais, especially her thick lips, looks very sexy.

With one look, Xiang Shaolong can hazard a guess about her character.

This kind of woman loves men who are stronger than her.

The young prince pointed at him and said with hatred, "Imperial Mother! He's the one who kicked me."

Empress Zhao's eyes turned icy and she lightly reprimanded, "You dare to offend even the prince! Xiang Shaolong, do you know this is a death penalty."

Xiang Shaolong replied without fear, "I now know my mistake, but at that time I did not know that Young Prince were among the 10 odd people surrounding and attacking me. I was only under Lady Ni's orders to teach Master Pan well, and also to defend myself, so I made such a mistake. Would your Majesty please look into this further?"

Obviously Empress Zhao has no idea what the whole thing was about and after staring at the Young Prince, she added coldly, "What actually happened? Tell me clearly from the beginning."

Therefore Xiang Shaolong truthfully related what happened right from the start, his voice full of confidence and persuasion, making Empress Zhao and all the concubines secretly discount what was originally told to them. When he spoke about how he taught Master Pan a lesson, he revealed a warm smile.

The Young Prince saw that the situation is amiss so he tugged Empress Zhao's sleeve and said, "Imperial Mother must help your son."

Empress Zhao furrowed her brows and asked, "What do you want?"

The Young Prince went to her ear and whispered a few words.

Empress Zhao nodded her head slightly and raised her voice, "Stand up."

Xiang Shaolong stood to his full height proudly, and for a moment he looked even better than the 20 stout looking men, making the eyes of the Empress and the concubines all light up.

It's the first time they have seen a person of such capabilities.

Empress Zhao said gently to the Young Prince, "Imperial Mother can accede to your request, and let them give Xiang Shaolong a beating so that your anger can be appeased. But if they were to lose to him instead, you will have to be like Little Pan and follow Xiang Shaolong and learn martial arts and bearing from him, will you agree?"

She saw for herself how he defeated Lian Jin the other day and knows that he is highly skilled, and now that she knows he's a good disciplinarian, she was overjoyed and thus made this request.

The Young Prince asked happily, "Will they all strike at the

same time?”

Empress Zhao furrowed her brows, “How can it be that unfair, isn’t it enough for you to pick three of them out?”

The Young Prince was wary after the beating by Xiang Shaolong and he shook his head, “No! Not enough.”

There was uproar among the 20 stout men, all revealing looks of unhappiness and spoiling for a fight.

Xiang Shaolong bowed and said, “Since your Majesty has agreed to Young Prince’s request, Shaolong is willing to give a try.”

Everyone in the hall gasped.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly laughing to himself, when it comes to freestyle fighting, he’s not afraid no matter how many people there are. These men are naturally considered strongmen in this era, but they’re a long way off if compared to Black Faced Deity.

The Young Prince exclaimed happily, “That’s settled then, fight immediately.”

And secretly thought to himself that he’ll surely be dead this time.

Xiang Shaolong removed his outer robe, revealing his wonderful physique, making the Empress and the ladies’ hearts all beat faster and their eyes mesmerized.

The 20 men were furious at being belittled and they all shouted in unison as they removed their tops, revealing their

exquisite upper bodies and came forward to surround Xiang Shaolong.

Xiang Shaolong had not had a good fight for a long time and was now in the mood for it. He followed them and removed his top as well, revealing his strong and chiseled body, and muscles with not an ounce of fat surrounding his broad chest and arms. The most impressive part is his six-pack on his tummy.

Empress Zhao has always been ignored by the King and her heart was aflame on seeing this, and was speechless for a moment.

The Young Prince shouted, "Strike!"

Four men immediately pounced towards Xiang Shaolong, with two going to hug him from behind and the other two waving their fists to attack his temple and chest, and it seems that they are not pulling their punches at all.

The ladies all screamed in unison.

Xiang Shaolong suddenly retreated, his left and right elbows knocking into the two men coming up behind him.

The two men groaned and knelt down on the ground.

Xiang Shaolong pressed down on their shoulders and used the motion to propel himself into the air, his legs kicking out and striking the two men who were attacking from the front right in the face.

With blood flowing down their noses, the two men covered

their faces and fell backwards.

In one instant he has dealt with four men.

The Young Prince was extremely nervous and kept cheering for the others.

When Xiang Shaolong landed on the ground again, he rolled forward and his legs kicked up diagonally. The other two men had never seen such unorthodox way of fighting and they were immediately kicked on their stomachs and sent flying off, unable to get up.

When he jumped up, a man attacked him with both his fists but he forcefully pushed the fists aside and took the opportunity to give two punches to the man's chest. He turned around with a kick and the kick landed on another man's chest, sending the two of them flying off at the same time.

His fighting style is a combination of Thai boxing, karate, western boxing and Korea's judo, mixed with Chinese martial arts, the moves welded after serious analyzing and it's not something that the martial arts of this era can fight against. It uses very little strength to defeat almost half of his opponents and those who were stuck will lose their ability to fight.

The other men were startled and retreated.

The Young Prince was dumbfounded, looking at Xiang Shaolong who seems to be as mighty as a deity unbelievably.

Empress Zhao could not take it any longer and shouted,

“Stop!”

The men all heaved a sigh of relief and helped the injured retreat.

Xiang Shaolong knelt down and said, “Would your Majesty please forgive me, Xiang Shaolong has been merciful in the fight, they’ll be fine after a short rest.”

The Young Prince was unhappy and pouted, “Imperial Mother!”

Empress Zhao stared at him and said, “It is your father and your good fortune that Great Zhao has such a marvelous warrior, what else do you want?”

The Young Prince was cowered by Xiang Shaolong’s air and for a moment was unable to speak. After a moment he stamped his feet and ran out of the hall.

Empress Zhao turned back towards Xiang Shaolong and her eyes gentle, said, “Imperial Protector, please rise.”

Xiang Shaolong stood up and bowed, saying, “If your Majesty does not have any other instructions, I will take my leave.”

After Empress Zhao waved the rest of the men away, she stood up and walked down the dais and said apologetically, “Imperial Protector’s clothes are all dirty!”

And shouted, “Men, bring Imperial Protector to the back palace for a bath and change.”

Xiang Shaolong was startled and thought that the situation is terrible, what difference is this from sending a goat to a

tiger's den? Before the concubines and ladies in waiting have a chance to reach him, he swiftly scooped up his clothes and signaled the ladies to stop, and begged the Zhao Empress, "I will be going to the state of Wei the day after, now we're in a hurry to prepare for the trip, would your Majesty please forgive me."

The more the Empress sees him, the more she is taken with him, but on seeing him so determined, she did not want to stop him, thinking to herself that in future there will be the excuse to ask him to teach the Prince martial arts, so there'll be opportunities to see him. She smiled and said, "At least let them help you dress!"

The ladies in waiting all swarmed forward and were busy helping him dress while giggling, and of course they took the opportunity to touch him to their heart's content.

The Empress and the concubines were all looking from the side with adoration in their expressions. However, Xiang Shaolong was worried, what if the King of Zhao were to find out about this, what would his reaction be?

He can't help but secretly lament.

CHAPTER 9
Flirting With The Virtuous Lady
[Translated by JEAN]

HE returned to Lady Ya's palace when Guo Zhong sent him the things he ordered. There were about a thousand pieces of flying needles, and the sight of it gave him a great boost. Lady Ya and Wu Tingfang were discussing the use of those strange things like springs, hooks etc, and when they saw him coming back, they immediately queried him. Xiang Shaolong hugged the two women and kissed and touched them until they were delirious and he totally avoided answering them. Suddenly a little esteemed guest arrived, and it's Master Pan, who was happily boasting to him how

he managed to wrestle and fell a lot of people. But he added, "But they defeated me very soon again."

Xiang Shaolong asked him about the young prince's attitude. Master Pan said, "Master is really great, to have beaten that bunch of warriors. The Young Prince might not admit it, but I can see that he is quite awed in his heart. Those who have not tasted your prowess and bravely wanted to seek you out but they were all rejected by Young Prince."

Lady Ya laughed, "What? Your little gang of bullies has finally met your nemesis?"

Master Pan looked at her lecherously, not at all giving way and said, "Isn't Aunt Ya conquered by Master as well?"

Lady Ya was so furious that she stared at him with rounded eyes, and ignoring him, left with Wu Tingfang. Master Pan stared at Wu Tingfang's perky bottom and said appreciatively, "Sister Wu is really pretty, no one in the palace can be compared to her."

Xiang Shaolong secretly reprimanded him for being a little lecher, but if they were to exchange positions, he may not be any much better than him. It's simply too easy to obtain women here. He asked, "Lad! Tell me, have you done it with women?"

Master Pan was excited as he replied honestly, "Of course, but I'm still a long way off compared to Master, even Aunt Ya has been conquered by you. I've long appointed you as the most attractive man in Zhao for women."

He continued with a low voice, "Have you touched Mother?"

Xiang Shaolong was stunned for a moment, this little imp is really difficult to handle, how can him impart to him the correct values?

Master Pan lowered his voice and added, "I've just asked Mother, her face turned red and she chased me out, but I can tell that she secretly likes you."

Xiang Shaolong did not know whether to be angry or to laugh, so he dragged him to the garden, forced him to do a few more exercises and taught him a few basics of the Mohist swordplay. Master Pan has already regarded him as his idol, and for once he was intent on practicing. It was only after dinner that Master Pan left, sad to part.

Xiang Shaolong had been working hard the whole day so he dragged the two ladies to the pool for some fun while the eight maids helped them pour in hot water. This enjoyment like that of an emperor gave him a feeling of decadence. When he's having fun, who cares about so much. But nevertheless he is someone who will not be willingly controlled by fate. So after having his way with the two ladies, while still hugging them in the pool, he started asking Lady Ya about the situation in the various states.

He asked, "Why is it that the other states know how formidable Qin is, but they do not unite against him? For example our trip to Wei this time, on the surface it's a peaceful trip but in actual fact there's something more sinister going on."

Lady Ya replied, "If you don't stop caressing me, how do you expect me to give you a proper answer?"

Xiang Shaolong released his hand that was encompassing her well endowed bosom, kissed her face and said, "Speak then!"

Wu Tingfang moaned, "Shaolong! Fang'er wants to listen as well!"

Xiang Shaolong laughed and moved his hand to hug her slender waist instead and asked, "Will this do!"

Wu Tingfang kissed him happily and hurriedly said, "Sister Ya speak quickly."

After spending these two days together, and with Lady Ya trying to get into her good books, these two ladies became as close as sisters. Lady Ya arranged the thoughts in her mind and sighed, "The main reason, I think is the problem of geography. For example the two states of Qi and Yan, are further away from Qin, so they do not feel the pain as acutely as us. Everyone knows that to become stronger, one has to expand the territory, that's why when the Yan saw us suffering a serious set back after Changping; they took the opportunity to invade. Who'd have the time to think about uniting against Qin?"

Xiang Shaolong nodded his head, "Ya'er's analysis is very reasonable, I'm sure the six states will be destroyed by the stronger Qin sooner or later, we should make plans earlier."

The two ladies were silent and unconsciously came closer to

him. Only that way can they feel a sense of security. In this era, losing a war means death to a warrior, and to women from the royal family it means losing their most basic dignity, and end up being worse than prostitutes, as playthings for men.

In the warm water, touching the two alluring bodies, Xiang Shaolong's mind began to wander, thinking about his extraordinary encounter. These few days he has not thought of which era he should belong to. All the relatives and friends are getting further and further away from him, separated by time that cannot be crossed. Something must have gone wrong with that Crazy Ma's machine, and he will be classified as mysteriously missing. No one will bother about him. The forgetful people will soon forget him, leaving him alone with secrets that he cannot reveal to anyone, struggling to survive in these heartless warring states. He once had grand dreams as well, it was Yuan Zong's sacrifice that fired his valor, making him think of using Emperor Qin to conquer the world and create a unified society. But the real situation about Emperor Qin shattered his dream, and he now only wants to numb himself with wine and beauties, enjoying life to the fullest.

He's not willing to give himself up to despair just like that. But what can he do? If the trip to Wei is successful, he may face the prospect of losing his official post and his life upon his return because Zhao Mu will certainly not let him off. The King of Zhao may be treating him very nicely now, but those royalty never regarded their subordinates as 'humans'.

There's no such concept as human rights in this era. What plans can he make? He can only take each step as it comes. Once he thought of this, Xiang Shaolong released the two ladies and pulled Xiao Zhao, who was pouring in hot water for him, into the pool, and began his outrageous acts. Amidst the women's giggles, the pool bubbled with countless loving acts.

The next day Xiang Shaolong taught Master Pan the Mohist swordplay for a while, and after joking and talking with him, realized that this stubborn little boy is four to five years more mature than others his age, wild and rebellious yet strong and smart. For the first time Xiang Shaolong felt a liking towards him.

Master Pan suddenly exclaimed earnestly, "Master! Will you marry my Mother? There are a lot of people who want to possess her inside and outside the palace, if someone I hate gets her, I'd rather kill myself."

Xiang Shaolong looked at him in shock and said with surprise, "I didn't know that you care for your Mother that much. But even if I have the intention of marrying your Mother, I'd still need his Majesty's approval. Firstly I have not made any significant contributions; secondly my position is lowly, so how can his Majesty agree. We'll talk about this at a later date!"

Master Pan said dejectedly, "What shall Mother do than. I've never seen her look at another man the same way she looks at you."

What an astute kid. Xiang Shaolong reached out and tousled his hair and was about to speak when from the corner of his eyes, he saw the fresh looking Zhao Ni walking towards them, her fragrance already preludes her presence. She saw Xiang Shaolong touching Master Pan's head, and her own son looking so obedient, a feeling of happiness she has not felt since her husband died in battle welled up in her and she said with a smile, "Good morning Mister. There's no way I can express my thanks to you, and I can only repay you in my next life."

Master Pan said quietly, "Mother! Why the next life?"

Lady Ni's cheeks immediately burned and she was shocked and embarrassed at the same time. She stared at him and said angrily, "Xiao Pan! You really don't think before you speak. This is extremely rude towards Mister and your Mother, you..."

Xiang Shaolong knows that it is going to be difficult for her to round this embarrassment up nicely, and Master Pan is a stubborn kid as well, so he quickly said, "Xiao Pan, aren't you going to make your escape quickly?"

Master Pan laughed and ran away. The atmosphere became even more awkward. Lady Ni was at a loss, it seems wrong to try to explain, but it seems even worse if she doesn't explain.

Xiang Shaolong looked at this virtuous lady looking so alluring lost, her resolution wavering and knows that the longer they stay in silence, the more the ambiguity of their

feelings will increase. He thought it interesting and deliberately did not speak, but just looked at her eyes. Lady Ni stole a look at him and their eyes met, she suddenly felt her body going soft, her heart beating erratically. What should she do? How can she lose her composure like that?

Xiang Shaolong saw that she's almost dying of embarrassment and thought that Master Pan was right, it's better to benefit oneself rather than others.

He asked quietly, "Shall we take a seat in Linzhong Pavilion?"

Linhong Pavilion is the deepest part of Lady Ni's courtyard, in the dense osmanthus forest, there is a hidden and exquisite pavilion, a good place for a rendezvous.

Isn't this considered a date.

Lady Ni was stunned for a moment and lifted her head to look at him. Confusion filled her eyes, unable to speak.

Xiang Shaolong knows that her heart was confused and wavering between the two extremes of preserving her chastity for her dead husband and to give herself to him in gratitude. He did not wait for her reply and seeing that there's no one around, he pulled her slender hands and walked towards the osmanthus forest.

Lady Ni was pulled along by him and was unable to break free so she had no choice but to follow him and lightly reprimanded him, "Mister Xiang..."

Xiang Shaolong was holding her soft hand. His heart seems to be filled with sweetness. He felt the excitement of flirting

with a virtuous lady so he has no time to think whether she's willing or not. He just pulled her along the forest and his eyes brightened, the pavilion appeared right in front of him.

Lady Ni struggled hard and broke loose of his grasp. She stopped moving immediately, lowered her head and said sadly, "Will Mister respect Zhao Ni's reputation?"

Xiang Shaolong knows that the more haste, the less speed, so he said gently, "I, Xiang Shaolong, am not someone who will force another. Come! Let us just sit for a while in the pavilion and enjoy the fragrance from the osmanthus."

Lady Ni said quietly, "But you must first promise me that you'll be respectful."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, the worse is that she will not stay, because if she's willing to stay, there's no way she can escape his clutches. If she can escape, he'll change his family name from Xiang to Zhao. He walked into the pavilion, sat on the stone ledge and signaled to her respectfully, "Lady, please come in for a short stay."

Lady Ni seems to have forgotten that Xiang Shaolong has not agreed to her condition of being respectful, and she walked daintily up the pavilion and leaned on the stone ledge next to him.

Because Xiang Shaolong was sitting on the ledge, their height is now about the same. The two faces met straight on, two pairs of eyes interlocked. This time Lady Ni was braver and did not look away, just that she looked lost and her bosom heaved as her breath quickened, as she does not

know how to hide her own feelings at all.

Xiang Shaolong was overjoyed on seeing that she finally could not withstand his flirtations, and began to lose his control, but yet he cannot be overly anxious or she will not be able to accept it.

He asked gently, "Can you smell the fragrance of the osmanthus?"

Lady Ni's face blushed redder and she nodded and made a sound of acknowledgement. Xiang Shaolong slowly extended his right hand carefully, and touched the side of her waist first, slowly but steadily moving his hand behind her waist and around the other side of her waist. Lady Ni was standing unsteadily and with a gasp, half of her body fell into his arms, her soft bosom pressing tightly on his right chest. Their breathing immediately quickened. Lady Ni is shaking in his arms like a frightened bird, but she did not struggle or object. She was blushing to the ears. Her heart is like a furnace, melting down the barrier of nine years.

That is such a long time. Xiang Shaolong came close to her face, only a few inches away and almost kissing her fragrant lips and asked, "How can the fragrance of the osmanthus be compared to Lady?"

Lady Ni was at a loss and said, "Didn't we agree that you will not be rude towards me?"

Xiang Shaolong is an expert at handling women and knows that the more he behaves like a rascal now, the easier will he achieve his aim so he asked in surprise, "How can this be

considered rude, it's a very big respect instead?"

Lady Ni was shocked but she was unable to speak, because her lips were already locked by a strong and flirtatious man.

The fiery tongue teased the inside and outside of her mouth. Lady Ni has always been a regal and conservative person, even her husband before his death treated her with much respect and abided by the ancient rules. They only sleep together once a month and there's no bodily contact at all outside of bed. To her, Xiang Shaolong's invasion now is even more outrageous than what her dead husband has done to her, and this is the reason why she cannot accept Master Pan flirting with the maids. But in an ordinary royal family, the parents will usually close an eye on such matters. What is most hateful is that the way Xiang Shaolong took advantage of her is a hundred times more bold and clever than what her dead husband did. His fearlessness gave her a taste of excitement she's never felt before. Until Xiang Shaolong invaded her tiny mouth did she instinctively extended her hand to push him, trying to separate the two lips. Her token struggle only served to fan Xiang Shaolong's desire. Initially he was only acting rashly, but now he is consumed by a burning desire, unable to stop himself.

He knows that he cannot just stop at this forced kiss, so as his tongue intertwined with hers; he hugged her closer. One hand holding her soft waist tightly and the other hand caressing her fragile cheeks, ears, hair and tender neck. Lady Ni's hands were grabbing his collar tightly, trembling and panting, her pretty eyes closed. The intention to struggle

being overwhelmed slowly by the long kiss. Xiang Shaolong's hands became naughty and slipped into her collar and when it came to her smooth and voluptuous bosom, Lady Ni gasped and her hands held his disobedient hands tightly in a death grip from outside her clothes. Xiang Shaolong knows that she is not really unwilling, but it's just a natural reaction of a woman trying to preserve their chastity so he was not disheartened. He caressed her full bosom with determined strength and moved his attack down inch by inch, and at the same time increased his attack on her mouth.

Lady Ni gasped and trembled, finally losing the defense of her chest, her bosom being taken over completely by Xiang Shaolong. The strong feeling of excitement and happiness made her hands surrender, unable to make any moves to defend at all. She lowered her hands and grabbed Xiang Shaolong's strong waist. Xiang Shaolong let his hands travel around her jade white chest, and then stayed there motionless. Slowly leaving her burning lips and lowered his head to study her pretty face. Lady Ni's mouth was opened due to her heavy breathing, and she slowly raised her lids, and it seems that she was looking at him angrily for a moment before closing her eyes again in embarrassment.

This look is even more effective than any flirtations. Xiang Shaolong removed his hands from her clothes and touched her taut and long legs. Lady Ni gasped in surprise and caught hold of his hand, her eyes begging him. Xiang Shaolong caressed her legs, slowly moving up while his lips came towards her mouth again.

Right at this intense moment, the sounds of maids calling could be heard. The both of them were startled and separated.

Lady Ni panted, "Please stop her. Don't let her see me like this."

Xiang Shaolong pinched her thigh hard before walking out of the woods and stopped the pretty maid who was running towards him and asked, "What's the matter?"

The pretty maid blushed and curtsied before saying, "Master Tao from the Wu residence is looking for Mister. Sister Xiao Zhao from Lady Ya's residence has accompanied him here."

Xiang Shaolong replied, "Will sister please ask him to wait a moment, I'll be right there."

The pretty maid said, "Mister just calls me Ying'er!"

And after giving him a sweet smile, left.

Xiang Shaolong was in high spirits and when he returned to the pavilion, Zhao Ni had already slipped away. He gave a bitter smile and returned to the hall to meet Tao Fang.

Tao Fang looked well traveled and when he saw him, he said in a low voice, "We just received secret news, this trip you're making to send Third Princess to Wei's capital Daliang is not without danger. Not only are the horse thieves eyeing you, it seems that the state of Qi wants to spoil this marriage arrangement between Wei and Zhao, and they're getting someone to spoil Zhao Qian's chastity. Shaolong must be very careful."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed in surprise, "This should be a highly secretive affair, how did the news leak out?"

Tao Fang sighed, "Naturally someone leaked the news deliberately. From what I see, this traitor would either be Zhao Mu or Prince Shaoyuan."

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, "What good will this do them? Prince Shaoyuan will be in the same boat as me, if we're attacked, he'll be in danger as well!"

Tao Fang replied, "It may be a complicated affair, I've come specially to remind you, the journey will begin tomorrow."

Xiang Shaolong remembered the Juzi token, and after telling him to send someone to give it to him, sent him off after chatting for a while longer. He was just contemplating whether to return when Lady Ni's maid Ying'er came to inform him that she'd like to see him. Xiang Shaolong was a little surprised and followed her into the house.

In the study he saw Lady Ni who was now back to her respectable self. After Ying'er closed the door and left, Xiang Shaolong walked forward cautiously and asked gently, "Is Lady is upset with me for being rude?"

Lady Ni stared at him lovingly, lowered her head and said, "You've been rude for a long time, so how can I blame Mister?"

Xiang Shaolong felt a rush of desire and grabbed her soft hands, saying with a smile, "I'm pleasantly surprised by Lady's admiration!"

Lady Ni's pretty face blushed again, and allowed him to toy with her slender hands and complained, "Mister will be going on a mission to Wei tomorrow. Hai! How do you expect me to spend this time?"

Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic, on hearing such heartfelt words. He pulled her into his arms, his mouth moving over her face as he said, "Time is short. Will Lady blame me for being too fast?"

Lady Ni's dailty body softened and she shook her head, lowering it. Xiang Shaolong felt his desire burning and as he kissed her, he loosened her clothes. Lady Ni let go of all restrictions and allowed him to do as he wants, even encouraging him with her tongue's fiery reaction, totally enrapturing Xiang Shaolong. Chaste women like this that have restrained themselves for so long, once they release their feelings, are frequently more vigorous than lascivious women. Lady Ni is like that; her long surpressed feelings erupted like water busting out from the mountains. The two of them were entwined for more than two hours before they stopped for lunch.

Master Pan came back excitedly and announced, "I defeated another two people, and they all want you to become their Teacher."

He then looked perplexedly at his mother who now has a glow that is not usually seen.

Lady Ni is really lousy, and she blushed in front of her son. She couldn't bear to leave Xiang Shaolong either, and she

looked thoroughly enticing.

Master Pan looked at Xiang Shaolong and asked happily, "Teacher and Mother..."

Lady Ni was embarrassed and overjoyed at the same time and reprimanded, "I won't allow Xiao Pan to speak further."

Master Pan stuck his tongue out and giggled but he stopped talking and started eating energetically instead.

Xiang Shaolong felt a rush of desire again and touched her thighs under the table, a feeling of bravery welling up in him. If he cannot protect the women he loves, how can he be considered a hero? Su Nu and Shu'er are dead; he will not allow another tragedy to fall on any of his woman. Once he thought of this, he's filled with valor, and resurrected again.

CHAPTER 10
The Night Is Painfully Short
[Translated by JEAN]

HE went back to Lady Ya's place, Ting Fangshi, Chunying and the other three maids were waiting in the hall. With the looming parting, they all have endless sweet nothings to say. Xiang Shaolong may be flirtatious but he's never had this experience of being surrounded by beauties, gentleness and warmth. Although he was thoroughly enjoying himself, but all these attentions proved too much and he can only suffer in silence.

After having a tired nap, it was already dark when he woke

up. He moved a little and immediately Ting Fangshi and Wu Tingfang who were entwined around him woke up immediately.

Wu Tingfang pouted, “Fang’er doesn’t care! I want to go with you to Wei.”

Xiang Shaolong was startled and was thoroughly awakened, secretly thinking to himself that it’s already a huge headache looking after Lady Ya and Zhao Qian, so how can he add Wu Tingfang into this. If the King of Zhao thought that he plans to slip away with his beauty that’d be even worse, so he hurriedly consoled her and using all his tactics managed to convince Wu Tingfang to abandon the idea.

By now the four maids have entered to help them wash up and change. Xiang Shaolong speedily dressed himself and went out of the room. Before he reached the hall, he could hear Lady Ni and Lady Ya talking and was greatly surprised and went in. Lady Ni saw him coming and her head lowered. Xiang Shaolong felt a loving pity well up in his heart, knowing that she is throwing aside her reputation to grab a chance to spend time with him before he leaves for Wei.

He sat down between the two ladies and boldly hugged their waists. Lady Ya was astonished and asked unbelievably, “You have already...”

Lady Ni nodded her head shyly and said, “Sister Ya, please do not laugh at Zhao Ni.”

Lady Ya exclaimed, “And you were pretending to be proper in front of me earlier.”

Xiang Shaolong pinched Xhao Ya's waist and reproached her, "Ya'er!"

Lady Ya totally obeys him so on hearing that; she stopped talking but just smiled.

Lady Ni whispered in his ear, "Will Xiang Lang blame Zhao Ni for being wanton?"

Xiang Shaolong chortled, "Why would I? The more wanton you are the happier I am."

Lady Ni did not expect him to answer her so loudly and she was so embarrassed she tried to hide herself in his arms, but her body was heating up.

Lady Ya smiled, "It seems that Ya'er will have to give way tonight, but let me discuss some business with Xiang Lang first."

She blinked at Xiang Shaolong and added, "Where would you like Lady Ni to await your attentions?"

Lady Ni was thoroughly embarrassed and can only listen on shyly, not objecting at all.

Xiang Shaolong might as well be thoroughly outrageous and he said with a laugh, "Lady Ni shall wait for me at the pool; I'll come and frolic with you in the water later."

Lady Ni stood up weakly, and left obediently like a little lamb.

The two of them watched as her beautiful silhouette disappeared behind the door, exchanged a glance and

smiled, their hands clasped tightly together.

Lady Ya said seriously, "I went to see Imperial brother, but he's unable to give us more men, how worrying."

She sighed and said, "The journey from here to Daliang will take at least three months, and we'll need to cross a huge river and countless deserted mountains and trails. After we enter Wei, we still need to visit the four cities Dangying, Chaohe, Guilin and Huangchi, each step of the way could be a danger."

Xiang Shaolong was silent for a moment before he asked, "Did Lady and that Prince Shaoyuan ever had an affair?"

Lady Ya nodded her head guiltily. Xiang Shaolong was extremely unhappy and did not say anything. Lady Ya exclaimed in fear, "Shaolong! Please don't be like that; Ya'er has changed for the better now."

Xiang Shaolong is after all a magnanimous person, so he sighed, "I'm already on bad terms with Prince Shaoyuan, and now with your old relation with him, things will become even more complicated."

Lady Ya said apologetically, "Ya'er knows she's wrong."

She tried to change the subject, "Prince Shaoyuan will bring with him his two most beloved concubines and 200 warriors with him, I'm afraid he'll try to go against you at every opportunity."

Xiang Shaolong said somberly, "I'm not afraid of him trying to be difficult with me, but I'm most afraid that he'll gang up

with outsiders to deal with us. If he's intent on not returning from this trip, he'll have the guts to do anything."

Lady Ya replied, "I have chosen four people from my own residence. These four people are not only brave and highly skilled, there's no doubt about their loyalty as well. I've also arranged for Cheng Xu to be your assistant. This person is indebted to me because I helped him when he faced the punishment of clan extermination, so he'll certainly work hard for us honestly."

Xiang Shaolong was a little assured and said, "I heard that the state of Qi is planning to spoil this marriage union, who are the formidable people that they have?"

Lady Ya sucked in a deep breath and said slowly, "The state of Qi has a mysterious person, called Xiao Weimou. This person thinks that beasts are most favored by heaven and earth, so if men want to return to nature and be one with heaven and earth, we must follow out desires, and the strong will devour the weak without any need for hesitation. And to become the strong, we must learn from tigers and lions and sharpen the claws and teeth. Therefore he and his disciples are all terrible warriors who rape, pillage and murder. They usually live deep in the mountains, forcing the men and women they kidnap to produce offspring for them and be part of their indecent play."

Xiang Shaolong asked in surprise, "How can the King of Qi tolerate such fiends committing evil in Qi?"

Lady Ya replied, "Among the six states, Qi's neighbour

Fuyuan was second to the state of Chu. After the battle of Maling, they replaced Wei and became leader of the various states in the east, and they were even put on the same standing as Qin and they were called Emperor of West and Emperor of East. They were expanding but in the end the united forces of Qin, Chu and us attacked their capital Linzi. In the end Yan's Yueyi took over about 70 cities, but there was a Tian Dan from Qi and the newly crowned King of Yan fell into Tian Dan's trap and changed the commander at the last minute. Therefore Tian Dan was able to sweep the Yans out of Qi but their resources were greatly depleted as well."

Xiang Shaolong nodded his head, "I understand, its because the King of Qi has limited resources, that's why he has to rely on and tolerate such vicious men to work for him."

Lady Ya said, "The person relying on them is Tian Dan. We've always suspected that Tian Dan and Xiao Weimou are from the same clan although they have different family names. This Xiao Weimou is highly skilled and can fight a lion with his bare hands, kill tigers and leopards, and his sexual appetite is higher than normal. Each night he must have at least 10 women before he can have a good night's sleep and he only helps Tian Dan assassinate his political enemies or travel to other states to engage in secret missions. If this person is to come personally, we'll be in even more danger. Ya'er would rather kill herself that end up in his hands."

Xiang Shaolong was alarmed at hearing all these, and after consoling her for a while, Wu Tingfang and Ting Fangshi came in. Lady Ya knew his intentions so she helped him hide

from the two ladies so that he can go to the pool. The maids were just adding hot water into the pool, Xiang Shaolong dismissed all the maids and went to Lady Ni and carried her up and into the warm pool fully clothed.

Lady Ni has always been prim and proper all her life, and did not expect that she'd ever meet with such an unconventional and unrestrained flirt. As she gasped in surprise, she immediately became a wet lady, showing off the beautiful outline of her body. Once he thought of his journey tomorrow and the uncertain future, he immediately became uninhibited and launched an all out attack on this beauty. Lady Ni was thinking of the same thing and received his favors with all her heated feelings.

As they entangled with each other, Lady Ni begged with tears falling down her face, "Xiang Lang! You must take care of yourself and come back safe to see Zhao Ni and Xiao Pan."

Xiang Shaolong asked, "If I were to leave the state of Zhao, are you willing to follow me?"

Lady Ni was startled, "Are you thinking of betraying Imperial bother?"

Xiang Shaolong sighed, "I'm just planning for the worst! Zhao Mu will certainly not tolerate me, and I am not someone who will just stay and be slaughtered."

Lady Ni nodded her head, "Imperial brother is really useless to put so much trust on such a conniving man. Zhao Mu has designs on me as well and tried many times to summon me to his place but I rejected him."

Xiang Shaolong thought that Zhao Mu may be one of the men that Master Pan fears that one day will get his Mother and sighed secretly. Now that Lady Ni has given in to him, all the more Zhao Mu will not let him off.

Lady Ni said determinedly, "My heart now belongs to you, no matter where Xiang Lang goes, Zhao Ni is willing to stay by your side forever even if I have to work hard."

Xiang Shaolong felt intoxicated and kissed her hard. At the same time he made this promise in his heart, "No matter how difficult the future will be, I must strive to survive in this turbulent warring states for the ones that I love and carve out an outstanding career. Xiang Shaolong will never be blindly loyal to anyone, but only loyal to my own ideals."

Before dawn the next day, Xiang Shaolong left, accompanied by the tears of Wu Ting Fang, Zhao Ni and the rest.

VOLUME 3

CHAPTER 1

Starting The Journey

[Translated by JEAN]

BEFORE they left the palace, the warriors and carriages gathered in the large field. The King of Zhao personally made prayers to Heaven and ancestors in a ceremony, praying for a safe journey, but of course Xiang Shaolong knows that

what he's praying for is that they can steal the 'Secret Manual of Lu Gong', and is not at all concerned about their life or death. Of course nothing has to be said about his daughter Zhao Qian's happiness.

The King of Zhao barely managed to transfer a few more men to Xiang Shaolong so that his troops now total 500. In addition to Prince Shaoyuan's 200 warriors, a total of 700 light cavalry now escort Lady Ya, Third Princess Zhao Xian, Lady Pingyuan and a group of concubines and maids who are traveling in 27 carriages, with 40 carts carrying provisions and miscellaneous items. They left with much fanfare out of Zhao's capital Handan via the southern gate, following the official roads towards their first stop Zixian.

This is still within the boundaries of Zhao, so they need not worry about safety. The great general Li Mu also sent 500 riders to escort them to the outskirts of city walls 200li away from Zixian city. Therefore Xiang Shaolong was still released, if he has to worry, he'll do it after they pass the city walls and on their way to Wei's border.

What surprised him was Lady Ya's eight maids, Xiao Zhao, Xiaoyu and the rest were all dressed in armor and riding majestically on their horses, their reflexes swift and nimble.

And then he realized, in this warring states era, it's natural that all males will learn martial arts, so it's no exception for fit women as well.

He is not an expert at all in the way the troops are formed in this era, so while there's nothing to do during the journey,

he started asked Cheng Xu.

Cheng Xu replied honestly, "A war is a matter of life and death, as long as there's an ounce of strength, that ounce of strength will be used to the end. In the battle of Changping, the state of Qin conscripted 15 year old boys into the army for battle. When the King of Yan attacked us the last time, his Majesty even conscripted under aged boys into the army. Luckily we could defeat Yan, if not... ai!"

Xiang Shaolong knows that Cheng Xu is Lady Ya's man, so he was a lot less guarded when talking to him. So he conveniently asked about how the army is formed.

Cheng Xu replied without hiding anything, "What the term three armies mean generally refers to strong men, strong women and old and weak armies. The army of strong men is the main force in battle, strong women are usually in charge of engineering, manual labor and any work that requires assistant while old and weak army are the back ups and in charge of miscellaneous work like being in charge of rations."

Xiang Shaolong was enlightened. When he watched movies in the past, all those battle scenes were magnificent and epic, filled with the romanticism of heroism. So it turns out that the truth is another matter altogether, that even women, children, the weak and old were all pushed to the battlefield to suffer and lose their lives.

Cheng Xu lowered his voice, "Although we have fewer men this time, but they're all elite warriors, so obviously his

Majesty is very concerned with this trip, which is very rare.”

Xiang Shaolong turned his head back for a look and saw Prince Shaoyuan’s 10 carriages and 200 warriors at the very end of the procession. He can’t help but sigh. He thought that if anything were to happen, Prince Shaoyuan will certainly not listen to his instructions. Just this ‘internal troublemaker’ is enough to give him a headache.

The two beauties Zhao Qian and Zhao Ya’s carriages all had their curtains lowered, and he can’t see what’s happening inside. He wondered if they’re secretly looking at him.

Once he thought of that, he moved his horse next to Lady Ya’s carriage.

As expected Lady Ya immediately rolled up her curtains, revealing her pretty face and aside with a coquettish smile, “Does Imperial Protector want to come up for a seat?”

Xiang Shaolong said with a bitter smile, “Your subject is on a mission, how I can be so rude?”

Xiao Zhao and the rest of the maids who were behind the carriage all covered their mouths and sniggered.

The four highly skilled and loyal warriors Lady Ya mentioned were split into two groups and protecting her on both sides, and on seeing Xiang Shaolong, all acknowledged him respectfully.

Lady Ya said, “The four of them are all orphans, so they follow my family name and are named Zhao Da, Zhao Er, Zhao Wu and Zhao Qi. If there’s anything you can just give

them orders.”

Xiang Shaolong saw that the oldest among them, Zhao Da, is only a few years older than him, while Zhao Qi is about 16 years old at the most. But they all look like strong and muscular youths with some skills, so he said with a smile, “My instructions to them would be to stay by Third Princess and your side at all times, that is enough.”

And secretly thought to himself that the state of Zhao may be the country with the most orphans and widows in this time.

Zhao Da and the rest all made their promise.

That day they traveled for more than 30li, luckily the scenery was picturesque along the way so Xiang Shaolong treated it as an outing, chatting with Lady Ya and the maids while he’s free so he don’t find it lonesome at all.

Zhao Qian and her two personal maids were hiding in their carriage and did not reveal themselves.

Although Xiang Shaolong very much wanted to see her, he must control this impulse. No matter what she is of an esteemed status now and cannot talk with men so easily. Besides he knows that she’s going to marry to the state of Wei, so it’s better not to be tangled with her.

At dusk, the entourage pitched tents to rest. There were more than 200 tents set up on the field next to a small stream.

In Xiang Shaolong’s Commander’s tent, Xiang Shaolong,

Cheng Xu and the assistant commander Li Mu, Ding Shou; as well as two other military leaders Zi Ji and Ren Zhen, all five of them sat around a table and enjoyed dinner.

For warriors like them, the topics talked about are naturally about war and strategy. Right now the very experienced general Ding Shou was talking about the changes in war and the situation like an expert.

Ding Shou said, "The wars last time were a lot simpler, wining or losing depends only on one direct clash, and the results will be known in just a few days. Even if it's a siege testing stamina, it will last only 20 to 30 days. King Chu Zhuang's besiegement of Song lasted nine months, and that is an extremely rare example. Not like the wars now, each can last three to five years, the suffering endured can be endlessly related."

Xiang Shaolong was curious and asked, "Why is the change so drastic?"

Cheng Xu interrupted, "Your honor has just recently joined the army; naturally you do not know the circumstances behind it. This can be explained several ways. Firstly, the population has increased thus the army has become stronger as well. The larger states in the past like Jin and Chu, the army is only about 4000 strong, they can't even find 10,000 people. But now if you include the female soldiers, the old and weak, you can have an army of hundred thousands. Secondly is the defense of a country..."

The commander Zi Ji added, "Imperial Protector Cheng is

correct, in the past the defense of a country only centers around its capital, it's only later that they slowly build up the nearby stockades into cities. But the rest of the places, the enemy forces can still pass through at will. It's like stateless land."

Ren Zhen chipped in, "Now it's a different thing altogether, the different states are now erecting their own city walls and castles. If you want to conquer another state, you'll have to attack the cities one by one, and there are other problems as well. So once a war is mentioned, everyone is troubled."

Cheng Xu continued, "The aims of battles in the past were to obtain goods and force the enemy to concede. But now the main task is to occupy the land and kill the enemy. The losers will perish with the thought of hatred and the loss of a country. Therefore everyone will fight the enemy to the death. Wars are really getting more and more difficult and violent."

Ding Shou sighed, "Also the large scale skirmishes for foot soldiers and cavalry and besiegement attacks have replaced the old strategy of using carriages as the main force of attack, which was neater and looks nicer as well. The art of war is becoming more complicated, and as the saying goes, a soldier will turn to every trick available, so now there's ambushes, luring the enemies, surrounding them, attacking them in the middle, waiting games etc. In order to defeat the enemy and ensure a victory, every possible idea has been used."

Cheng Xu said with a laugh, "In those days both sides will first choose a time and location and make an appointment. On the day of battle they will both use war carriages as the main force, foot soldiers as support troops and position themselves nicely before beating the drums to signal an attack. Everything is simple and quick. But now there's no such thing. It's best if your enemy doesn't even know that you're right outside their gates so that they will be caught unawares."

He continued with a big sigh, "Fighting for territory and killing people in the fields, fighting for cities and killing people in the cities."

Ding Shou sighed as well, "In the past we'd just temporarily conscripted the farmers to be soldiers, but now warfare is getting more and more professional, not only are there full time soldiers, even the training is stricter as well."

Xiang Shaolong could feel their fear and how fed up they are with wars. He thought to himself that if soldiers like them feel this way, all the more Lady Ya and Master Wu would feel as such too. Especially after the battle of Changping, the state of Zhao was in a dangerous position and everyone only looked out for themselves. It seems that there really is not much time left for Zhao, so how can he escape with all the ladies to a safe place in time so that they will not end up casualties of the impending doom.

Just as he was deep in thought, noises can be heard from outside the tent.

Xiang Shaolong and the rest were surprised and they all rushed out.

They saw Lady Ya's camp area were full of soldiers, and sounds of argument could be heard.

A soldier rushed over at this time and huffed, "Something bad happened; Prince Shaoyuan's man Xu Hai killed someone."

Xiang Shaolong and Cheng Wei exchanged a glance, and they could all tell it's a way Prince Shaoyuan is belittling them.

The one killed is Lady Ya's family warrior Zhao Er.

It turned out that while Xiang Shaolong and the rest were in the tent dining and chatting, Prince Shaoyuan took the opportunity to lead the three of his most formidable family warriors Xu Hai, Pu Bu and Liu Chao as well as 10 odd fighters to barge their way into Lady Ya's private tent. Obviously he's trying to resume their old relationship and at the same time cause Xiang Shaolong a loss of face.

The guards naturally dared not stop him, until they reached the restricted area of Lady Ya's private camp, separated by a curtain, and which is where Zhao Da and the rest stopped them. Before they had a chance to inform Lady Ya of the new arrivals, Prince Shaoyuan who was deliberately looking for trouble has already ordered his men to attack the four of them. They were caught unawares and were greatly outnumbered; the four of them were all injured. Zhao Er's throat was slashed by Xu Hai and died on the spot.

The guards behind the curtain felt that something was wrong and they all charged out and surrounded Prince Shaoyuan and his men, thus blocking their way.

Prince Shaoyuan's family warriors heard about the news and were rushing to give aid but the imperial soldiers under Xiang Shaolong's command stopped them. For a moment everyone was in a deadlock.

By the time Xiang Shaolong, Cheng Xu, Ding Shou and the rest rushed over, Lady Ya was surrounded by Xiao Zhao and the rest of the maids, the blood stained Zhao Da, Zhao Wu and Zhao Qi. Her pretty face was pale with fury and she was staring at Prince Shaoyuan with hatred.

But Prince Shaoyuan and his men stood around with a look that said there's nothing anyone can do to them. When he saw Xiang Shaolong arriving, he ignored him and spoke to Ding Shou instead, "What is all this, what's the big deal about me killing a rude person who offended someone of a higher rank than him. Assistant Commander Ding, you'd better chase all these people away."

Ding Shou was furious but he understood the way of the political world and he did not try to undertake the problem. He said somberly, "Imperial Protector Xiang is in charge of everything here, I am only in charge of everyone's safety along the journey."

Lady Ya moved next to Xiang Shaolong and said quietly, "Kill Xu Hai for me, I'll bear all consequences."

Zhao Da and the rest were close like brothers with Zhao Er,

they knelt down and said, "Would Imperial Protector Xiang please decide for us."

Prince Shaoyuan sniggered coldly and crossed his arms in front of his chest, looking insolently at Xiang Shaolong, deliberately making him look bad.

By now the curtain has been pushed to the ground, the imperial soldiers surrounding them saw how disrespectful Prince Shaoyuan was towards Xiang Shaolong and they felt the same belittlement from him as well. They all roared, the situation was tense and anything could have triggered it off.

Xiang Shaolong raised his hand to signal everyone to be quiet. His heart filled with old hatred and new enmity, he really felt like killing Prince Shaoyuan right now but of course he cannot do that.

Even if he ignores the fact that he's supposed to protect Prince Shaoyuan until the state of Wei, he has to consider that the second in command in Wei is Prince Shaoyuan's uncle, so how can he ever get to Wei if he kills him. Prince Shaoyuan is certain of this point that's why he deliberately tried to belittle Xiang Shaolong on the very first day of their journey.

But if he were to let this past and swallow the insult, no one will ever respect him in future.

This is an era where only heroes and the strong are respected. Maybe even Lady Ya would change her opinion of him.

Everyone's eyes were centered on him.

Xiang Shaolong's gaze landed on Zhao Er's body, which has been moved to the side and coldly uttered, "Xu Hai!"

The tall, thin and sturdy Xu Hai who looks fierce and icy was about to respond when Prince Shaoyuan stopped him, "I gave the orders, if you want you can come after me!"

Xiang Shaolong's eyes were piercing as he looking as Prince Shaoyuan and said, "If Xu Hai can block three of my sword attacks without dying, then this thing shall come to an end!"

Everyone turned quiet.

Some even thought that Xiang Shaolong is just trying to do a slip shod job.

Although Xiang Shaolong's swordplay is excellent, but to kill an expert like Xu Hai within three strokes, is something unimaginable.

Naturally Prince Shaoyuan does not believe that three sword attacks would be able to kill Xu Hai and he was secretly ecstatic, thinking that if his three attacks came to naught, his reputation will be in tatters. However, his expression remained unperturbed and said, "If Imperial Protector is injured by Xu Hai then you cannot blame anyone."

Xiang Shaolong looked heavenward and laughed loud and long and with a 'clang', drew the precious Rainbow Sword which Zhao Mu gave him, pointed it at Xu Hai and said, "Come!"

Men from both sides retreated to form an empty area.

Xu Hai sniggered and pulled out his sword as well.

He has seen Xiang Shaolong and Lian Jin's duel in the palace and is aware of his swordplay. He thought to himself, did he think that he couldn't even block three sword attacks? He made up his mind to be on the defensive and to move quickly and constantly so that there's no way Xiang Shaolong can execute his skills.

Cheng Xu, Ding Shou, Lady Ya and the rest all thought that Xiang Shaolong is using this as a chance to back down. They secretly sighed, thinking that it's the best choice out of the worst.

Xiang Shaolong took a deep breath, supported the Rainbow Sword on his shoulder and walked towards Xu Hai.

Xu Hai's arm extended, his long sword held horizontally in front of his chest, pointing from afar at Xiang Shaolong's throat, trying his best not to give Xiang Shaolong a chance to get close to him. His strategy is appropriate.

The audience on both sides all seems to foresee the outcome of the duel, where Xiang Shaolong will retreat empty-handed.

At this time Xiang Shaolong advanced to the area about two steps away from the tip of Xu Hai's sword. However, he seemed to step on something and slipped a little. He lost his balance and leaned to the side.

Lady Ya and the other women were all concerned about

Xiang Shaolong and they screamed in alarm.

Prince Shaoyuan and his men were ecstatic, and they all cheered for Xu Hai.

Xu Hai is an expert in swordplay, so how can he let go of this one in a million chance. He roared and rushed forward, his long sword aiming towards Xiang Shaolong fast as lightning.

Who would have expected that the swordplay Xiang Shaolong is using now was what they had discussed earlier, 'a soldier will resort to all tricks'. Because under normal circumstances, he would not be able to kill a professional swordsman like Xu Hai even with 10 attacks, so the only way is to lure him to strike so that he'll have an advantage.

Just as the sword was about to reach his chest, he quickly steadied himself and at the same time using his amazing waist strength to bend over backwards, his body almost bent at a 90-degree angle like a bow.

The long sword slid over above him.

Never in his dreams would Xu Hai imagine his opponent would execute such a weird move. His sword struck air and because he used too much strength in the attack, he was still moving forward with the force. Just as he was about to wave his sword and slash downwards, Xiang Shaolong has already given a kick to his nether region.

Xu Hai screamed from the pain, the long sword flying out of his hands while his body staggered back in a fall.

Xiang Shaolong's waist straightened again, the Rainbow

Sword which was perched on his shoulder morphed into a flash of light and sliced past Xu Hai's throat.

"Peng!"

By the time Xu Hai collapsed onto the ground, he has already become a lifeless corpse.

Everyone was silent in that moment followed by thunderous cheers from Xiang Shaolong's side.

The faces on the men on Prince Shaoyuan's side all turned ashen, their bravado gone.

Xiang Shaolong looked at Prince Shaoyuan icily and said nonchalantly, "Prince Shaoyuan is of an esteemed status and we dare not offend you, but if your servants comment any wrongdoing, don't blame me for being severe."

Prince Shaolong stared at him with hatred, his lips trembling but no words came out. He stamped his feet furiously, turned around and left.

Xiang Shaolong called out, "Hold on! Is Master going to leave your servant's body out in the wilderness?"

Prince Shaoyuan was embarrassed and furious and after ordering his men to carry Xu Hai up, left in a huff.

The imperial soldiers broke out in thunderous cheers, even Cheng Xu and the rest had an expression of awe and respect, thinking that Xiang Shaolong handled this matter beautifully and there's no way Prince Shaoyuan can raise his head over this.

After Prince Shaoyuan left, Xiang Shaolong felt something was amiss and after giving some instructions, he returned to his commander's tent. He ordered men to stand guard outside, to stop all visitors and laid out the metal instruments Guo Zhong made for him on the ground.

These instruments gleamed, the workmanship exquisite, which greatly impressed Xiang Shaolong. He did not expect that in this warring states period, the standard of metal works would be of such high quality.

The first thing he has to assemble is a metal hook that can be used to climb over walls. That is one of his must have treasures while he was in the special task force. They used a projectile to launch the long hook over the walls or any place that can support the weight, before attaching the rope to the hook around their waist. In that way they can climb up or slide down walls freely.

They used steel ropes in the special task force but now he can only use soft ropes as replacement.

Even though the contraption is simple and Xiang Shaolong has always been interested and familiar with such gadgets, he still had to work late into the night before he got most things done.

He was just looking at his handiwork with satisfaction when he could hear Lady Ya's unhappy voice outside the tent, "Who has the audacity to stop me!"

Xiang Shaolong wanted to keep his things but there wasn't enough time. Lady Ya has rushed in and on seeing the weird

things on the floor, she asked in astonishment, "Shaolong! What are you doing?"

Xiang Shaolong smiled embarrassingly and kept the two separate hooks back into the chests and said with a bitter smile, "You don't have to obey me anymore?"

Lady Ya immediately softened and went into his arms, saying sadly, "I sent Xiao Zhao over many times to look for you but was stopped by the guards. I thought you were unhappy with me over Prince Shaoyuan's matter and I was in a panic, so I came to look for you. How would I dare to disobey you!" She can't help but ask, "What are those things?"

Xiang Shaolong said condescendingly, "Just some toys, but sometimes they have unexpected uses."

Lady Ya's slender hands reached out and took a ring of long and thin metal pieces, some curved and some with a small fork at the other end. She thought about it and asked, "Is this used to open locks?"

Xiang Shaolong knows that he can't hide this from an expert like her and nodded his head helplessly.

Lady Ya turned her body around, a look of shock flashed past her pretty eyes. She looked at him for a while before saying, "I'm beginning to feel more and more that you are unfathomable. Just now you tricked and killed Xu Hai and avenged Zhao Er and at the same time helped me vent my anger. Ya'er is really grateful to you and willing to do anything for you."

Xiang Shaolong saw how obliging she looks and gave her a long kiss as a reward before whispering in her ear, "Promise me! Don't tell anyone what you saw, all right?"

Lady Ya was dizzy from his kiss and nodded her head blissfully, her pretty eyes half closed and said coyly, "Xiang Lang's words are my most important orders. Since I know you do not wish me to ask about such matters, Ya'er will never ask you again in future."

Xiang Shaolong was assured by her kind understanding and took the opportunity to ask her to find someone to help him sew something to be tied around the waist so that he can keep those thousand odd flying needles. To be able to do something for her beloved, naturally Lady Ya agreed happily.

That night they enjoyed themselves amongst indescribable warmth and love.

They continued on the journey early the next morning.

Prince Shaoyuan's side has quiet down and staying right at the back to show that they're a separate group but they did not do anything new to antagonize the others.

The sense of unease Xiang Shaolong felt became even stronger.

For a spoiled brat like Prince Shaoyuan, he's definitely not one to swallow an insult. Now that he seems to be controlling his temper, it must be because there are traps to deal with him once they enter Wei.

Third Princess Zhao Qian stays in her carriage all day long

with the curtains lowered. Even when she left the carriage, a veil covers her face and she'd hide immediately in her tent, not taking even a step out, which totally irked Xiang Shaolong.

Traveling in the day and resting at night, by the 4th day they finally reached the stockade nearest to Zhao's border, District Ci. The general guarding the city, Wa Che was extremely respectful to this wedding entourage and hosted a feast in the General's Manor for them. Zhao Qian and Lady Ya are royalty, so naturally they did not attend the feast while Lady Pingyuan and her son excused themselves. Luckily this Wa Che is a humorous person full of anecdotes, so the guests and the host all enjoyed themselves.

After the feast Wa Che took Xiang Shaolong to tour the border of the state of Zhao, the lolling hills surrounding the endless city walls.

Standing on the city walls, Xiang Shaolong remembered that in future Emperor Qin will join the walls of the various states and become one of the world's 10 miracles, the Great Wall of China, and allow China to be able to unify all the states for a long time. He can't help but feel a string of emotions well up inside.

These city walls were thick and high, the moat in front of the city deep and wide. It's indeed the best way to defend against an enemy in those times. In the distance a huge river surrounds them, the rushing torrents extremely breathtaking.

Wa Che pointed to an empty plain outside the city walls and said with a smile, "That would be Great Zhao's ugliest place, but it's man-made. Every once in a while, we'll have to chop down all the trees outside the city, not leaving even a stone. Anything that can be moved will be moved into the city, not allowing enemies to find anything useful to attack the city with."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that this is what they call fortifying the walls and clearing the wilderness. Looking at the watchtowers that was built after every hundred feet or so, he sighed with compliment, "With such defenses, who'd be afraid of the enemy attacking?"

Wa Che pointed at the huge river in the distance and said, "Our city walls which spans a few hundred li also depends on the natural defenses like the possibility of floods and the layout of the land to defend ourselves mainly against Wei and Qin."

Xiang Shaolong agreed, "It is of utmost importance that the border city is situated at a dangerous and important location. Our city walls are backed against mountains and that in itself is a location that is easy to defend but difficult to attack."

The long city walls are like the strong arms of a giant, hugging Zhao tightly and safely in his arms.

Wa Che said proudly, "In order to deal with the enemy's hundred and one weird methods of attacking a city, for example piling soil to raise the height, cloud ladders, digging

tunnels, attacking with water, lining up along the walls like ants, or even using ballista, nest vehicles etc to attack the city walls and we had to make repairs to the walls on many occasions. Now I'm not trying to boast, but even with the vicious Qin army and us not having any reinforcements, we can still block them for quite a few months.

He then took him to look at the various weapons for defense like cross bows, halberds, spears, axes, long mallets, long sickles, long axes, stone ramparts etc. As well as various carriages used to ferry soil or people, which is a real eye opener for Xiang Shaolong.

There's a huge amount of water and sand on top of the walls as well as containers like water jars, wooden and tiled jars. There are even stoves and cauldrons. All these are used to defend against the enemy using fire to attack them, or used to attack enemies who are climbing up the walls.

Xiang Shaolong stored all these information in his memory, thinking to himself that there may come a day where he'll need to use such prehistoric tools to attack a city. At least he won't be at a loss then.

Lastly Wa Che said, "The key points in defending a city, besides having all the defenses up, is to have enough rations and fuel, and the most important is to have sturdy soldiers who stand their posts inside, as well as reinforcements outside. As the saying goes, if there's no army worth saving, then there's no city worth defending."

Xiang Shaolong lowered his head and listened to the lesson,

but when he thought of how few men are left in Zhao, he can't help but feel anguished! He really feels like dragging the conniving Zhao Mu here and let him have a taste of facing the enemy with the possibility of perishing under the city walls so that he will never dare to hide safely Handan plotting how to get rid of loyal officials all day long.

Only at dusk did Xiang Shaolong return in high spirits.

He returned to the huge military mansion where they are staying when Xiang Shaolong suddenly had an idea. He used the excuse of paying his respects to Lady Pingyuan and went to the east wing to visit this lady whose power extends into the two states Wei and Zhao.

Coincidentally Prince Shaoyuan is not around and after the servants conveyed his presence, Lady Pingyuan received him in the main hall of the east chamber.

This is the first time Xiang Shaolong met Lady Pingyuan, and saw that she was graceful and beautiful. Because she took good care of herself, she looked a lot younger than she really is and from afar, she looks like she is in her 30s. Only on a closer look can one see the fine wrinkles below her eyes, but these did not spoil her beauty.

Her hair was combed into a high bun, slanted to the side, which seems to tremble falteringly, making her look even more womanly.

She's wearing an embroidered silk skirt, silk shoes sewn with flower patterns, the hairpieces on her head inlaid with turtle shells, with pearl earrings. She looked very captivating and

attractive.

Xiang Shaolong did not expect that after having such a grown up and wicked 'kid', she can still maintain such regality. He was secretly surprised and after paying his respects, he took a seat below.

Lady Pingyuan, with four maids standing erect behind her, was scrutinizing Xiang Shaolong closely but her expression remained cold. There was not a trace of happiness at all, making the atmosphere extremely awkward.

Xiang Shaolong started by saying, "Lady must have had a hard journey, if there's anything that I have not done well, please do not hesitate to reprimand me."

Lady Pingyuan looked at him calmly and said, "Who'd dare to blame sir?"

Xiang Shaolong knows that because he has offended her son, she is keeping herself aloof and was about to find an excuse to leave when Lady Pingyuan dismissed her maids and said seriously, "A good man is one who understands the time and situation, and I wonder if Imperial Protector Xiang is one who understands the time and situation?"

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that the show is about to start, and said respectfully, "Would Lady please enlighten Shaolong."

Lady Pingyuan said icily, "If you can't even comprehend the situation you are in, I do not wish to waste my time talking to you."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought her formidable and said, "A good bird will choose a tree to nest in, but if there are rotten trees everywhere, then won't it have no nest to rest itself even if it has lofty aspirations of flying high up into the sky?"

It must be known that what the two of them are discussing is akin to betraying Zhao, so Xiang Shaolong deliberately used metaphors so that Lady Pingyuan will not be able to use this to trap him.

Firstly, he doesn't really think that it's a great deal to betray Zhao; and secondly, if he can get into the good books of this woman, maybe the trip to Wei will be a lot more easier. Or else if she were to say something about him to Prince Xinling, he'll be in big trouble.

Lady Pingyuan seems very impressed with what he said and a trace of a smile could be seen from the corners of her mouth and she said nonchalantly, "The strongest now is Qin. But the Qins are barbaric and extremely discriminatory against other races. Even with Shang Yang's many meritorious reforms in Qin, his entire family was still executed, so for a good bird to choose a tree, there are many other factors to consider as well."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly surprised at her opinions, and for a moment couldn't decide if she is trying to acquire him so he tested her, "Is Lady aware of the situation between me and your son?"

Lady Pingyuan's pretty face turned frosty and said, "Useless young thing, looking for his own humiliation, Shaolong can

ignore him. Since when is it his turn to make decisions?"

She continued with a smile, "If not for the fact that you're excellent in both martial arts and scholarly pursuits; and you were able to lure Xu Hai to his death under such circumstances, I won't even be bothered to say all these to you."

Xiang Shaolong felt his heart run cold. The people in this era really treat a human life as nothing. Seeing that she's so astute and formidable, he knows that he cannot offend her, so he said respectfully, "Would Lady please guide me."

Lady Pingyuan's attitude warmed up and said gently, "Shaolong should be very familiar with the situation in Zhao. The King of Zhao favors Zhao Mu and this person hates you, but do you know the reason why?"

Xiang Shaolong sighed, "It seems that it's because I took his Lady Ya away from him."

Lady Pingyuan's sharp eyes shot an icy look at him and said with a cold humph, "You think too lowly of Zhao Mu, why would he give up a rare and capable talent like you over a slut that everyone can have."

On hearing the way she described Zhao Ya, Xiang Shaolong naturally felt very uncomfortable. But he has to admit that what she's saying is true, or at least that was what Zhao Ya was like in the past. At the same time he was curious and asked, "What could be the reason then?"

Lady Pingyuan smiled mysteriously and said, "Because his

Majesty has taken a liking to you.”

Xiang Shaolong immediately felt himself go numb and he exclaimed hoarsely, “What?”

On seeing his expression, Lady Pingyuan giggled, “You’re really muddleheaded, if not because Xiaocheng is looking at you differently, why would he give you such a good task.”

She continued after staring at him intently, covered her mouth and smile, “Anyone who likes men will not let you off, Shaolong you’d better be careful,”

Xiang Shaolong saw that her eyes seem to be speaking volumes now and she looked coy. His gaze can’t help but drop down to her perky chest and felt an itch in his heart. However he quickly thought of the great enmity between him and her son over Su Nu’s death and had to stop himself from uttering the flirtatious words that was about to come out from his mouth. He sighed and said, “I understand, that’s why Zhao Mu will use all methods to kill me, but I’m also worried that Prince Shaoyuan might be secretly plotting against me!”

Lady Pingyuan smiled mysteriously and regained her icy expression and said, “Let’s not talk about this first. Shaolong, tell me honestly, in the whole wide world now, who has the capability of stopping the thieving Qins from attacking eastwards?”

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, as he’s still not that familiar with the situation in the warring states period now and cannot think of such a person. But he has to reply her or

Lady Pingyuan will surely be offended.

As he was thinking, Lady Pingyuan hinted gently, “Don’t tell me Shaolong doesn’t even know the person who helped Handan during its difficult period six years ago?”

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed, “It’s Prince Xinling!”

258BC, the King of Qin sent his generals to attack Zhao and heavily surrounded Handan while Wei sent Jin Bi to help but the King of Qin threatened them. The King of Wei was frightened and actually ordered Jin Bi not to move his troops. Later Prince Xinling used Hou Ying’s trick to obtain the military token and told his man Zhu Hai to kill Jin Bi and to usurp his troops. That year Prince Xinling defeated the Qin army greatly right under the walls of Handan and even Qin’s main general Zheng Anping surrendered to the Zhaos.

This battle caused the reputation of Qin to fall greatly while Prince Xinling became a respected man by everyone. But because of this, Prince Xinling offended the Wei king and was unable to return home. After staying in Zhao for a many years, he only returned to Wei last year after the death of Prince Pingyuan.

Now it’s Lady Pingyuan’s turn to return to Wei, and of course it’s because once again Prince Xinling has solidified his power and is inviting Lady Pingyuan back.

Lady Pingyuan gladly commented, “Now Prince Xinling is the only one who can gather the world to fight against the Qin. So unless Shaolong wants to throw in your lot with the Qins, or else the only place that you can stay on will be this choice.

If I am willing to recommend, I guarantee that you will be highly regarded.”

Xiang Shaolong knows that the only way is to try to delay. Luckily no matter how smart or formidable she is, she will never guess that he has Emperor Qin as one of his moves, so he got up and thanked her, “Thank you, Lady, for your recommendation!”

The two were about to continue their conversation when Prince Shaoyuan rushed in excitedly and shouted, “Mother!”

Lady Pingyuan said angrily, “Shut up!”

She turned towards Xiang Shaolong and said, “Imperial Protector will you please go back first. I’ll discuss with you in details what we’ve talked about at a later time.”

Xiang Shaolong was secretly thinking that Prince Shaoyuan has come at the right time, so he hurriedly bid his farewell and left.

CHAPTER 2
Tribulations In love
[Translated by JEAN]

WHEN Xiang Shaolong returned to his residence, Cheng Xu came up and told him, "Someone from the Wu family is looking for you."

Xiang Shaolong was greatly surprised and with Cheng Xu's accompaniment, went to the quiet side hall.

A tanned man of about 35 or 36, with two exquisite 'lian' made of steel crossed behind his back, looking like swords without scabbards, standing straight in the middle of the hall, his eyes shining, with an imposing aura about him.

The pair of 'lian' is about five feet long, and it looks like something between a spear and a halberd, just very much shorter.

That person saw Xiang Shaolong, a gleam shot past his eyes and he knelt down, "Wu Zhuo pays his respects to Grand Young Master-in-law."

Xiang Shaolong was overjoyed as he knows that he is the leader of the Wu family's secret army and hurriedly helped him up. Cheng Xu thoughtfully made his exit.

After they were seated, Wu Zhuo said, "Under Master's orders, we've been scouting ahead for Grand Young Master-in-law, and indeed we found out something."

Xiang Shaolong saw his somber expression and was secretly alarmed.

Wu Zhuo continued in a low voice, "I don't know who leaked the news, but the most vicious horse thieves between the borders of Wei and Zhao are aware that you are bringing treasures and Zhao's prettiest ladies and traveling towards Daliang. The situation is extremely unfavorable for you."

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows, "The Weis won't just sit by and do nothing right?"

Wu Zhuo replied, "Someone from Wei secretly told us that not only will King Anli not send anyone to protect you, he even supplied horses and weapons to one of the biggest group of horse thieves called Hui Hu and secretly ordered them to attack your convoy."

Xiang Shaolong was shocked, "Isn't that Hui Hu the one who attacked us within the borders of Zhao? Why did he go to Wei?"

Wu Zhuo replied, "It's the same person. At that time they suffered heavy losses after their attack failed, and later the Zhaos pursued them. That's why they escaped to the Wei border and gathered dissidents on the way. Now they have more than 1000 men, not a force to be taken lightly."

Xiang Shaolong is getting a headache over all these. Firstly, why would the King of Wei send men to deal with him? Secondly, how did he end up working with Hui Hu's group of horse thieves?

Wu Zhuo added, "All along, we've suspected that the few groups of horse thieves within the Zhao border have the backing of the King of Wei so that they will weaken Zhao's strength. That's why every time they are in danger, they will escape to the borders of Wei and now this has affirmed our theory."

Xiang Shaolong is getting a splitting headache, the more he finds out about the relations between the various states, the more he feels that the complicated relationship is making him even more confused. He furrowed his brows and asked, "But this time we're giving the Third Princess of Zhao to the Weis, why would the King of Wei use such methods to receive us?"

Wu Zhuo replied, "I'm not very sure of the real reason, but we can guess that this involves the power struggle between

the King of Wei and Prince Xinling. Ever since Prince Xinling stole the military token and defeated the Qin army, his accomplishments is considered greater than his master. So naturally this will incur the wrath and jealousy of the King of Wei. Besides Prince Xinling has stayed in Handan for a long time, so if the King of Wei can destroy the marriage agreement, the most affected by this will naturally be the relationship between Prince Xinling and the Zhaos.”

He continued, “And the marriage agreement is brought about by Prince Xinling single handedly.”

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself ‘Heavens!’ Why are the relationships between the people in the warring states period so complicated and incomprehensible. Lady Pingyuan was trying to recruit him on behalf of Prince Xinling earlier, and the Zhaos have a more sinister plot to steal Prince Xinling’s ‘Lu Gong’s Secret Manual’. What kind of a relationship is all these?

Wu Zhuo whispered, “We have spies in Hu Hui’s camp, and apparently Hu Hui hates you to the core and is determined to capture you and all the ladies alive and rape all of them right in front of your eyes in order to give vent to his anger.”

Xiang Shaolong gave a cold snort, “That’s only wishful thinking on his part.”

He sighed and continued, “Are there any news of that person who does not wish to be a human but wants to be a beast instead, Xiao Weimou?”

Wu Zhuo shook his head, “This person is famous for being

mysterious. Every time he attacks, it's a surprise. There's no clue about an impending attack at all. He's a lot more frightening than Hui Hu."

Xiang Shaolong is so vexed he felt like pulling out his hair, and said seriously, "The route to Wei was planned by Zhao Mu long ago, with the approval of the King of Zhao, so it cannot be changed. If the person who leaked the news is Zhao Mu, this means that the enemy will be very familiar with our route, so we'll always be in a situation where we can only react to circumstances."

Wu Zhuo smiled meaningfully, "Would Grand Young Master-in-law be someone who listens to orders blindly?"

Xiang Shaolong chortled and nodded, "You really understand me."

He thought to himself this time he will have to use all his tricks and make use of the modern military knowledge he learnt to deal with the various traps laid along the way.

Wu Zhuo added, "I've brought with me a hundred good fighters, to become Grand Young Master-in-law's family warriors. Hei! To be able to work under Grand Young Master-in-law, we're all very excited."

Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic, and after the two of them secretly discussed the details, Wu Zhuo left in a hurry.

He'd just stepped out of the hall when he learnt that the pretty maid Xiao Zhao had been waiting patiently for him for a long time.

Xiang Shaolong told her to return first. He found Cheng Xu and told him briefly the dangerous situation.

Cheng Xu's face turned pale on hearing it and said, "I'll find Zha Yuanyu immediately to discuss this matter and tell him to bring more rations and increase fortifications so that we can deal with the thieves' attacks."

Zha Yuanyu is Cheng Xu's assistant, and also the rations officer for this trip, in charge of setting camp and all co-ordinations. If the enemy were to attack, they'll either look for dangerous spots to lay a trap, or to steal their rations. Therefore it's a must to increase the defenses of the camp.

After Cheng Su left, Xiang Shaolong recollected his thoughts and went to the inner courtyard.

Xiao Zhao, Xiaoyu and the rest of the maids were all in the hall, happily sewing the armor for him that he will be using to hold his steel needles.

When they saw him arriving, they surrounded him and frantically helped him remove his heavy armor, and tied the inner armor made from cowhide, filled with small and long pockets, with strings around his waist. As if it's a game, they laughed as they slipped the needles into the sturdy pouches, revealing only about an inch of the tip of the needles.

He tried a few moves, rapidly pulling out the needles and throwing them towards the wooden door, hitting it with a 'chook chook' noise. He realized that although he's wearing about 20 over catties of flying needles and his armor, but he could still handle the extra weight without any hindrance to

his movement and speed.

Xiang Shaolong's mood changed for the better and after bantering with the maids for a while, he went towards Lady Ya's room.

The eight maids continued working hard to make this needle pouch more sturdy and perfect.

Inside the bedroom Lady Ya seems lost in thought.

Xiang Shaolong walked over and saw that Lady Ya was standing with her back to him next to a window, looking out at the woods, deep in thought.

Zhao Ya has changed into a robe with two long silk tassels hanging down, draped with a well tailored and eye catching robe, her hair combed into two buns. Contrasted with her slender waist and fair skin, she looks utterly bewitching.

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself this is truly nature's finest specimen, no wonder she can charm so many men and become the most famous wanton in Zhao. He tiptoed behind her and grabbed her shoulders, pressing his body against her pert buttocks.

He had just uttered the word 'Lady' when Zhao Ya shook violently and struggled.

Xiang Shaolong was shocked and let his hands go.

That Zhao Ya ran to a side and turned around, her face filled with fury, and surprisingly it's the royal Third Princess Zhao Qian.

Xiang Shaolong knows that he's in trouble and hurriedly knelt down but he was at a loss as to what to say.

Zhao Qian saw that it's Xiang Shaolong and her anger subsided. In replacement she blushed deeply, stamped her feet and ran away.

Zhao Ya could be heard calling after her outside but obviously she did not manage to stop her.

Xiang Shaolong stood up, her fragrance still lingering on his body, his heart beating erratically.

Lady Ya walked in and she looked unhappy. She stared at him and walked over, asking icily, "Shaolong! What have you done to Zhao Qian?"

Xiang Shaolong was very unhappy with her tone of voice and attitude. Besides he was not in a good mood after hearing Wu Zhuo's news so he thought to himself, so be it that you do not trust me, why should I explain to you. He gave a cold snort and walked out the door.

After all Lady Ya is one who is used to having her orders obeyed, and although she loves Xiang Shaolong extremely, she is firstly annoyed that he touched the untouchable Third Princess, and because she could not tolerate such an attitude, she cried out angrily, "Stay there!"

Xiang Shaolong stopped walking, and thought of her promiscuous past and also how she drugged him with aphrodisiacs to help Zhao Mu deal with him, and how she allowed Zhao Mu to take liberties with her while in the

carriage. He'd suppressed all these feelings usually but now they've come bubbling up to the surface and he felt extremely upset. He stared at her coldly and asked, "What instructions do Lady has?"

Lady Ya's heart turned cold on seeing his look and she softened. She moved to him and asked a little fearfully, "Don't you know you cannot antagonize Zhao Qian?"

Xiang Shaolong was not appreciative of her change in tone at all and said emotionlessly, "Your servant will not dare to do so in future, may I take my leave now?"

Lady Ya thought to herself that she has not blamed him wrongly, so how could she tolerate such an attitude from him so she stamped her feet and said, "Fine! Xiang Shaolong, get lost now."

Xiang Shaolong thought of the past and felt that without this woman, he'll save himself a lot of troubles. Although life in future may not be so easy, but he can't really be bothered now and left. Of course he did not forget to take the inner armor with him as he left.

That night Xiang Shaolong did not step into Lady Ya's abode at all. After dinner, he went to the garden to practice his flying needles and after happily practicing for a while, his anger towards Lady Ya ceased as well. Just as he was pondering if he should look for her, Zhao Da suddenly came and knelt down on seeing him, his eyes filled with unshed tears of fury and helplessness as he said, "Master Xiang please decide for us brothers. That conniving thief Prince

Shaoyuan came to look for Lady and after talking to her in private for a moment, Lady invited him into her room."

Xiang Shaolong was dumbfounded. Prince Shaoyuan had just killed Lady Ya's loyal subordinate Zhao Er, and now this wanton is inviting him to his room. No wonder Zhao Da is so furious and for him to come and complain to him, it's obvious that he is prepared to lose his life over this.

Xiang Shaolong helped him up and instructed, "Take it that you've never come to look for me, understand?"

Zhao Da was livid, "I'm not afraid of anything now."

Xiang Shaolong secretly sighed and instructed him not to follow him. He went towards Lady Ya's residence and deliberately took a detour and went through the back garden. Naturally the guards dared not stop him but when he reached the inner courtyard from the back garden, Xiao Zhao and the other maids were all shocked and their faces turned pale, thinking of blocking his way.

Xiang Shaolong had a murderous look and uttered coldly, "Give way!"

The ladies dared not really stop him and they retreated.

Xiang Shaolong went to Lady Ya's bedroom and kicked the door open with his leg.

Prince Shaoyuan and Lady Ya cried out in alarm at the same time.

The two of them were sitting next to each other on a long

chair, Prince Shaoyuan's hands reached out and hugged Lady Ya tightly, as if he was going to kiss her lips while Lady Ya was trying to push him off, her face coy. The scene is enough to make Xiang Shaolong burn with fury.

Prince Shaoyuan stood up angrily and pointed at him, "What audacity!"

Xiang Shaolong recollected his thoughts and thought that if it comes to reasoning, he really does not have the authority to barge in like that and spoil their fun. But in this era where the strong represents everything, what counts is talent, so there's nothing much to be said. Besides, Prince Shaoyuan caused the death of Su Nu, and he can't wait to rip him apart. His eyes glaring murderously, his hands on the pommel of his Rainbow Sword, he stared at him unwaveringly, making Prince Shaoyuan's heart turn cold.

Lady Ya actually had no intention of canoodling with Prince Shaoyuan, but because Prince Shaoyuan came to look for her saying that there's something about Xiang Shaolong and Lady Pingyuan that he has to tell her in secret, that's why she invited him into the room. Who'd expect that after he said his words, he tried to force himself on her and Xiang Shaolong happen to barge in right at this time, scattering her wits.

It was just a lover's quarrel for them earlier but now that Prince Shaoyuan is involved, this has turned into another matter.

She saw that Xiang Shaolong's expression was icy cold, as if

he's going to kill someone. She was so frightened that she jumped up and stood between the two of them, screaming, "No!"

Naturally Xiang Shaolong knows he cannot kill Prince Shaoyuan, and he heard the footsteps of Prince Shaoyuan's men hurrying over from the outside so he took the opportunity to step down and said, "Protect him if you want! From today onwards, I shall not be bothered with your private affairs."

He turned and left, ignoring the curses of the shocked Prince Shaoyuan.

He bumped right into Prince Shaoyuan's four warriors in the hall.

The four of them were overcome by his aura and moved aside, watching as he left.

Xiang Shaolong returned to his own room and felt relaxed instead.

All this time he has been troubled by Zhao Ya's scandalous past.

He's never had the experience of engaging with wanton women. Even on the day that he was sent to this era by the time machine, he was having fun with the queen of bars Zhou Xiangmei, but that was just a one night stand, and he'd never think of living with her.

Now that Zhao Ya has stated that she wants to change for the better and follow him; that is another matter. He saw for

himself the two of them hugging and it doesn't matter if any force was used, the fact is Zhao Ya invited him into her room. Obviously wantonness is already in her nature, and never thought of defending herself against men. This point is enough to make him furious.

The door opened, Zhao Ya walked in looking sad and angry and after she closed the door, she leaned against the wall at the side, looking sadly at the calm and composed Xiang Shaolong who was sitting on the rug.

Lady Ya lowered her head, "It's my fault for misunderstanding you."

Xiang Shaolong said emotionlessly, "You've asked Third Princess?"

Lady Ya nodded her head slightly, and asked angrily, "Why didn't you explain to me? I have feelings of jealousy as well!"

Xiang Shaolong chortled, "This doesn't matter now. It's late! Lady, please return and rest! We have to be on our way again tomorrow."

Lady Ya looked at him in shock, and on seeing his cold expression. She threw herself into his arms, her arms going around his solid neck and cried in alarm, "Shaolong! Please listen to my explanation. He tried to force a kiss on me, I..."

Xiang Shaolong remained unmoving as a rock, not even twitching the muscles on his face. He looked at her coldly and said, "If you can explain why you invited a man who has just cruelly killed your loyal subordinate, and an enemy of

mine, as well as a lecherous ex-lover of yours into your room, I will forgive you.”

Lady Ya was at a loss for words.

For someone like her who grew up in a rich and powerful family, she wouldn't be overly bothered about the life and death of a subordinate. As for letting Prince Shaoyuan into her room, although it was Prince Shaoyuan who initiated it, but at that time she really harbored the thought of having her revenge against Xiang Shaolong. Of course she did not expect Xiang Shaolong to barge in.

Hot tears rushed out.

Xiang Shaolong smiled, “Lady! I am not bothered about how you and Zhao Mu joined forces to harm me, because I thought that you will concede to me with all your heard from now on. Only today did I realize it's just wishful thinking on my part. Even if you want to copulate, you don't have to do it with Prince Shaoyuan! There are a few hundred strong young men around here, choosing any one of them will make me feel better.”

“Pak!”

A handprint appeared on Xiang Shaolong's face.

Lady Ya covered her face and wailed as she retreated, crying out wretchedly, “You insult me, I really...”

Xiang Shaolong raised his voice, “Shut up!”

He touched his cheek and added, “This slap will signify the

end of our relationship, you can be with whoever you like, I will not be bothered. If you find me a hindrance to your eyes, just ask your imperial brother to kill me. But don't blame me for warning you, whoever tries to kill or harm me, will have to pay a bitter price."

And he walked out of the room furiously.

Lady Ya screamed, "No!" and tugged his clothes.

Xiang Shaolong pushed her away and left.

Extremely furious, he thought of his two greatest enemies.

What kind of a world is this, he obviously knows that Zhao Mu and Prince Shaoyuan had committed atrocious crimes, how can he continue to let them strut about so publicly.

No!

I must become this era's strongest person, by then I need not bend over backwards just for survival, and live so unhappily.

In order to avoid Lady Ya, he hid himself in a dark corner. As expected, Lady Ya ran out in tears looking for him.

Xiang Shaolong went back to his room, thinking to himself that he won't be able to get a good sleep tonight, so he might as well practice with his newly set up climbing equipment to see if it works.

Once he made up his mind, he felt like a little kid who is going to have fun. He changed into a black outfit, brought his equipment and climbed out his window into the courtyard.

The only target for his practice is naturally Lady Pingyuan and her son. Under the cover of the night, he used his ability and swiftly and quietly made his way to the courtyard where Lady Pingyuan is staying.

When that lone building came into his sight, he saw that security was tight. Unless one can morph into a bird, he can forget about slipping in. Lamps were lighted in the hall, and voices could be heard.

Luckily Xiang Shaolong has the ability to climb up high.

He first chose a tall and sturdy old tree about 10 feet high and shot out his hook, aiming at the branches about three feet away before attaching the rope to the clasp around his waist. Making use of the pulley he pulled on the rope and rose up, and in a short while reached the horizontal branch.

He continued on like this and after a while he was almost at the top of the wall, about eight feet high, the scene in the courtyard right below his eyes.

He looked out for an opportunity and once again shot the hook out with the projectile, hitting right on target the wall on the other side of the courtyard. When the hooked which was wrapped in soft hide landed on the tiles, it only emitted a very faint noise.

Xiang Shaolong tugged on the hook, until the hook was tightly embedded on the wooden beam of the roof. He tested its sturdiness before hooking it to the clasp on his waist again and leapt off the tree, and quietly slid down to the roof opposite.

He then leaned down and took out a hollow and round metal tube, with the hole on one end bigger than the other. He pressed the wider hole tightly on the tile while he plastered his ears to the narrow end of the hole. Like a modern doctor with his stethoscope, the sounds in the room immediately amplified and filled his ears.

He heard Prince Shaoyuan said angrily, "If not for that Xiang Shaolong barging in, I'll surely be able to deal with that slut. Humph! Let's see if she dares to disobey me."

Lady Pingyuan was heard saying, "My child why be so impatient now. Zhao Ya is yours sooner or later, and even Zhao Qian won't be able to escape from your clutches, humph!"

Xiang Shaolong felt his skin go numb, he did not expect that Lady Pingyuan to actually be of the same thinking with her son.

Lady Pingyuan continued, "You better not go and bother Xiang Shaolong, this person can be made use of greatly by your uncle."

Prince Shaoyuan said angrily, "He treats me so badly, how can I take this lying down. Unless Mother can tell me clearly what you intend to do to him, or else I will certainly be at odds with him."

He then tried cajoling, "Mother! I'm all grown up now. I should be able to share you and Uncle's burdens!"

Xiang Shaolong secretly prayed, hoping that she'll reveal it.

Luckily Lady Pingyuan has always spoiled her son and couldn't withstand his begging and said, "Do you know why Uncle kept pushing for the marriage between Zhao and Wei, and deliberately leaked the news about the 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual' to the Zhaos?"

Xiang Shaolong felt his body turn cold on hearing this, so it turns out that 'Lu Gong's secret manual' is part of the plot. From this one can see that how Prince Xinling, one of the four Princes of the Warring States period, is so formidable.

Prince Shaoyuan begged, "Mother! Tell me quickly!"

Lady Pingyuan said, "This is a big secret, besides you and me, not a third person must know of this, understand?"

Prince Shaoyuan hurriedly gave his promise.

Lady Pingyuan was silent for a moment before she said, "I have no choice but to let you know as well, because we'll need you to coordinate with the skilled pugilists Uncle sent to put this important mission into motion."

Prince Shaoyuan tapped his chest and said, "Leave it to me."

Lady Pingyuan said, "In order to steal 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual', the Zhaos will certainly send their best warrior to Wei. Now that they've sent Xiang Shaolong. This person is both skilled in swordplay and intelligent, just the right person for us."

Prince Shaoyuan is not an idiot, and he uttered in shock, "Is Uncle trying to recruit him? But he and I..."

Lady Pingyuan interrupted him coldly, "Don't worry! Your enemy is my enemy. I'll make sure he'll die without even a proper burial place."

Prince Shaoyuan said happily, "That's really great."

Xiang Shaolong who was eavesdropping from the roof was furious and really felt like leaping down and stabbing both of them.

So it turns out that Lady Pingyuan has an ulterior motive with him.

Such a vicious woman, is really a fine specimen of this era where the strongest will survive.

Lady Pingyuan said in a low voice, "Once we bribe that fool, we can arrange for him to assassinate the useless King of Wei. With your uncle's help and that fool's excellent martial arts, it will certainly succeed."

Prince Shaoyuan shivered and asked hoarsely, "What?"

Lady Pingyuan humph, "Look how alarmed you are. As soon as Xiang Shaolong succeeds, your uncle's men will kill him on the spot and there'll be no witnesses left. Then we'll push all the blame to the Zhaos, and by then your uncle will be able to openly send troops to attack Zhao and gain control of military power. By then won't the state of Wei will be in his pocket?"

Xiang Shaolong felt cold sweat running down his body on hearing it. Only now did he understand why Lady Pingyuan said Prince Shaoyuan will be able to get both Zhao Qian and

Zhao Ya.

Prince Shaoyuan exclaimed joyously, “This is indeed a perfect plan, but Xiang Shaolong is no fool. I’m afraid that he might pretend to be on our side but later complain about us to the King of Wei. That would be terrible.”

Lady Pingyuan smiled icily, “Do not belittle me and your uncle. I married your father in the past with the hope that he can ascend the throne. Unfortunately he was unable to succeed and died early as well, or else you could have already been the King of Zhao. We have thought of a way to deal with Xiang Shaolong, and that is to force him to a dead end so that he has no choice but to throw in his lot with us.”

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brow, and thought to himself what are their ways to force him to a dead end?

Naturally Prince Shaoyuan couldn’t guess as well and kept pressing Lady Pingyuan for the answer.

The regal lady who is beautiful on the outside but venomous as a snake on the inside said with a lowered voice, “As long as Zhao Qian’s virginity is lost, where else can he go?”

Xiang Shaolong almost exclaimed out loud on hearing this, and at the same time was glad that his unplanned trip here has allowed him to overhear such an important plot. Naturally he concentrated hard to continue to listen in on the plans this mother and son team has for Zhao Qian.

CHAPTER 3
Turbulence In The Camp
[Translated by JEAN]

THAT night Xiang Shaolong did not sleep a wink after he returned to his room, and spent the night thinking. Under Ding Shou and Wa Che's escort, the convoy passed the Zhang River and entered the wilderness that belongs to the state of Wei. Lady Ya knows that he is still angry so she stayed inside the carriage and did not bother him. Xiao Zhao and the other maids looked unhappy and sad, because Lady Ya has given strict orders and they dared not speak to him.

Prince Shaoyuan deliberately showed his uncooperativeness

by lagging behind and slowing down the group. Xiang Shaolong was confident and was not bothered at all. By dusk, they've only managed to travel about 20 odd li.

By now Xiang Shaolong's attention was solely on the enemy who will appear any time now. He chose a highland with a mountain backing it to set up camp. Xiang Shaolong placed his own commander's tent as well as Lady Ya and Zhao Qian's tents in the middle next to the mountain, the remaining 500 warriors split into three groups to set up their tents to the extreme right.

Prince Shaoyuan's tents were set up at the extreme left, which shows an obvious divide in the camps. Naturally Xiang Shaolong knows what he is up to, because tonight the highly skilled martial artist sent by Prince Xinling will infiltrate into Zhao Qian's camp from his side before setting off drug inducing smoke so that he can sneak into Zhao Qian's tent and despoil her. And the person who volunteered to do this is Prince Shaoyuan. If not for the fact that Xiang Shaolong is aware of their plot, it's very possible that they have a high chance of success. Who would think that they'd have to be on the alert against an inside thief?

Xiang Shaolong stood straight at the highest point of the mountain, looking at the rolling hills below him and secretly thought to himself that no wonder Prince Xinling's men would choose this place to strike. That's because even when one is near the area, they will be difficult to spot and Prince Shaoyuan knows this secret, that's why he deliberately delayed the journey.

By now Cheng Xu has come up to him and commented, "I did not know that Imperial Protector is so well versed in setting camp. Even Zha Yuanyu who thinks of himself as an expert was complimenting your layout for being convenient and flexible and he's extremely impressed."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that he's had 2000 more years of experience since their time, naturally he's good at it but when he replied, he was very humble instead.

Cheng Xu lowered his voice, "I've sent my trusted aide to make contact with your man Wu Zhuo and told him not to come to the camp for the time being. Hei! I think Sir feels that something is happening."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that this is not a feeling, but a 'fact'. He is dealing with Prince Shaoyuan tonight so he does not want Wu Zhuo's men to be embroiled in all this so that things will not be even more complicated. Right at this time Zha Yuanyu who is in charge of setting up camp came to them to report that his task is accomplished.

Although Xiang Shaolong knows that no matter if it's Hu Hui who has an old enmity with him, or Xiao Weimou and his team of assassins from Qi, they will only strike when he's deep into the state of Wei so that he won't be able to run back to Zhao. Therefore he instructed Zha Yuanyu to remove the 40 carts from the mules and line them along the circumference of the camp so that they can be the first line of barriers against enemy attacks. This move made Zha Yuanyu even more confident about him and he went gladly

on his way to work. Cheng Xu saw that he is so insightful and was even more in awe of him.

Xiang Shaolong was silent for a moment before he said in a lowered voice, "I have something really important for you to do, but you must not ask the reason why. Find me a group of soldiers with good arm strength and prepare tools for digging ditches and await my orders. But you must hide it from others, especially Prince Shaoyuan, understand!"

Cheng Xu thought that he was going lay traps around the camp and left to follow his orders. Xiang Shaolong prepared himself for quite some time, sighed deeply and forced himself to look for Lady Ya. In order to deal with Prince Shaoyuan, he can only make peace with her.

The soldiers were setting the fire to prepare dinner and when they saw Xiang Shaolong, they greeted this commander respectfully from the bottom of their hearts. Xiang Shaolong was secretly happy and knows that the incident where he killed Xu Hai has been imprinted in their minds. When he give them commands in future, it'll be a lot easier.

The cloth that separated the camp from the tents came slowly into view. Zhao Da and the other two were chatting with a few of Zhao Qian's personal guards and they stood at attention when they saw Xiang Shaolong. After Xiang Shaolong smiled and greeted them, he went into the restricted area of the camp.

There are four tents in there, Lady Ya and Zhao Qian stays in

the bigger tents. Xiao Zhao and the other maids were preparing dinner at the empty space and were ecstatic when they saw Xiang Shaolong. Xiao Zhao and Xiao Mei even lowered their head and cried. Xiang Shaolong replied them with a smile and went into Lady Ya's private tent.

Zhao Ya was sitting numbly at a corner, her eyes swollen, obviously she has been crying. Xiang Shaolong secretly sighed again, and began to understand that he is growing to love her more and more, that's why he could not tolerate her outrageous past or her being close with other men from now one.

Zhao Ya saw him coming in and she stood up in alarm and joy, unable to believe her eyes and cried out, "Shaolong!"

Xiang Shaolong smiled, "You're not allowed to cry, I'll leave if you cry."

Zhao Ya forced her tears back and shouted, throwing herself into his arms, her shoulders shaking but she dared not cry out loud. Naturally Xiang Shaolong's shoulder was soon wet.

Xiang Shaolong caressed her back and said gently, "Do you still dare to be disobedient in future?"

Zhao Ya shook her head furiously, meek as a lamb. Xiang Shaolong hugged her and sat down, wiped away her tears and said with a smile, "Now let me test how obedient you are. Now go and look for Zhao Qian and tell her that tonight, I want all the women in here to hide in my tent. This must be kept a secret."

Zhao Ya looked at him in shock, but as afraid that she'll offend him again so she kept nodding her head, looking so obedient yet pitiful. How enchanting.

Xiang Shaolong can't bear to see her like that so he whispered in her ear, "I'm afraid that someone will sneak in tonight and do something bad to her!"

Zhao Ya heard his gentle tone and she became bolder and kissed him cautiously, saying, "You really will forgive me?"

Xiang Shaolong smiled and nodded. Zhao Ya stole a peek at him and asked, "You really won't put it to heart at all?"

Xiang Shaolong sighed, "What can I do? Who told me to love you so much that I can't stay away?"

Zhao Ya gave a shout of cheer and kissed him.

After a long while, Zhao Ya said with much sufferance, "You almost scared me to death, if you do that to me again, I can only die." Her pretty eyes reddened again.

Xiang Shaolong felt bad for her and after consoling her, slapped her hard on her buttocks and commanded, "Aren't you setting off to work for me?"

Zhao Ya stood up and holding his hand, asked, "If Zhao Qian was to ask me; how Xiang Shaolong knew that someone is going to attack her camp, how should I answer her?"

Xiang Shaolong knows that she has been assured and his alertness has returned. He knows that she's using Zhao Qian as an excuse to ask him, so he laughed and said, "Don't

worry! She will trust me absolutely, just do as I say.”

Zhao Ya was frightened and exclaimed, “Shaolong! It’s not that I don’t trust you! I’m just curious. And you still want to treat me like that.”

Xiang Shaolong saw how expressive she looked and felt his desire rising but he knows that tonight is not the time to have such fun so he kept his urge down and pushed her out of the tent. He then went to look for Cheng Xu, “I want you to dig a few holes that can hide some people around Third Princess’s main tent, and at the same time find 20 expert archers to hide with us in the holes and enjoy the grand event that’s about to happen.”

Cheng Xu was dumbfounded on hearing that. After giving instructions about the details, Xiang Shaolong chortled and returned to his tent for his meal.

The cold wind swept through the land. The crescent moon hung high up on the sky, illuminating the camp that was in total darkness. Besides the soldiers patrolling the circumference of the camp, everyone else was sound asleep after a tiring day of travel. Xiang Shaolong, Cheng Xu, Zhao Da, Zhao Wu, Zhao Qi and the 20 archers were the exception. They were hidden separately in the hidden holes at the four corners surrounding Zhao Qian’s tent, waiting for the grand event that Xiang Shaolong said will happen. They have fought to stay alert for many hours, and that is certainly not a comfortable stay. In another four hours the dawn will break.

Just as Xiang Shaolong's own confidence was a little shaken as well, there was a sound that came from Prince Shaoyuan's side of the camp. Everyone was immediately refreshed and using the moonlight and their eyes which has long been accustomed to the darkness, they turned towards the direction of the sound and stared.

A skinny and short shadow that looks like the size of a child snuck in quietly. He moved nimbly to the nearest tent and in his hand he was holding a pipe looking thing. A faint light was seen. Everyone could clearly see that the intruder is a wretched looking man who is as skinny as a monkey, his hand holding something that looks like a tiny stove with a round pipe attached to it, and the fire was lighted in the stove. That person waited until the firelight in the stove was steady before he pushed the tube that was emitting smoke under the tent.

Xiang Shaolong dared not even exhale loudly, looking that this person working slowly as he put the drugged smoke into the four tents. That person let out a bird cry. Obviously the signal to summon his gang and truly, 10 odd people came over and spread out at the various important positions, surrounding the four tents. Another five or six people came later, one of them is naturally Prince Shaoyuan. Everyone worked quietly, not daring to make any noise. The atmosphere was tense and heavy.

Prince Shaoyuan went to the door of Zhao Qian's camp while the others moved to the tents of the maids, leaving only Lady Ya's tent, which no one touched. Xiang Shaolong was

fuming as he saw this. These beasts won't even let innocent maids off. If not for the fact that Lady Ya is also Prince Shaoyuan's target, and there is no way he can split himself, she would not have escaped tonight as well. Once the stove that sent the drugging smoke was extinguished, the short man made a hand signal and Prince Shaoyuan and his men moved unanimously into the tents. Xiang Shaolong knows that it's time and he gave the secret signal. A 'chook chook' sound was heard.

The light arrows shot out from the heavy bows in the holes, eliminating the 10 odd men who were keeping a look out around the camp. Prince Shaoyuan and the rest realized the tents were empty and they cried out in alarm, but by then the 10 odd men outside already fell to the ground with a cry. Torches were lit. Another group of soldiers led by Zha Yuanyu surrounded the ladies camp. Those who snuck into the tents rushed out of it. By now Xiang Shaolong and his men threw away their bows and jumped out of the holes with their swords drawn, starting a merciless attack on them. For a moment the sounds of weapons clashing and battle cries thundered in the air.

The person Xiang Shaolong targeted was Prince Shaoyuan so he took out a flying needle first and threw it at his thigh just as he was scrambling out of the tent. Prince Shaoyuan screamed and fell to the floor, dropping the sword in his hand. Xiang Shaolong dashed forward and kicked him hard on the groin. Prince Shaoyuan screamed like a pig being slaughtered, his cries echoing in the night sky and he

collapsed onto the ground, the heart wrenching pain making him squirm violently on the floor. He does not even have the strength to strike now. Xiang Shaolong moved diagonally across, his sword shone, and decapitated an enemy who was about to retaliate. Thus the battle ended, with the enemies either killed instantly or seriously injured and captured, none escaped. The whole camp was a flurry of activity. The soldiers all ran towards them. Lady Pingyuan who was waiting for good news at the other side rushed over with her family warriors as well.

The cloth surrounding the tents were pulled down, the torches illuminating everything as if it was daylight. Zha Yuanyu's men stopped Lady Pingyuan's men from charging over. Xiang Shaolong chortled and walked over to Prince Shaoyuan who was still writhing in pain on the ground and gave him a hard kick on his waist so that he turned over in pain. He then stepped on his chest, his long sword pointing at his throat and smiled at Prince Shaoyuan whose muscles twitched so much that his face was contorted and said, "Hey! So it's Prince Shaoyuan, I'm sorry if I've offended you."

Lady Pingyuan's angry and frightened voice rose up, "Xiang Shaolong!"

Xiang Shaolong was still staring at Prince Shaoyuan as he shouted, "Yuanyu how you can be so rude towards Lady, quickly invite Lady over."

By now Lady Ya and Zhao Qian emerged from the commander's tent and looking at the person next to Xiang

Shaolong and the surroundings, they all knew clearly what had happened.

Although a few hundred people surrounded them, no one said a word, and only the crackling sounds of the burning torches were heard. Lady Pingyuan walked over furiously and exclaimed, "Aren't you going to release my son quickly."

Prince Shaoyuan was about to say something when Xiang Shaolong's long sword moved forward, the tip of the sword in his mouth. He was so frightened he dared not move, and even his moans stopped.

Xiang Shaolong looked at Lady Pingyuan icily and said somberly, "I, Xiang Shaolong, have been given an important task to escort Princess to Daliang. Now Prince Shaoyuan is in cahoots with outsiders and released drugged smoke in an attempt to outrage Princess's modesty. How is Lady going to explain all these?"

Lady Pingyuan saw her son's bloodied leg and she was at a total loss and anxiously cried out, "Let him go first before we talk."

Xiang Shaolong's eyes were stern as he said determinedly, "No! I am going to execute him on the spot, and bear all responsibilities. At the most we will return to Zhao immediately and I will let his Majesty decide my fate."

Lady Pingyuan turned pale and her lips trembled as she uttered, "How dare you!"

Zhao Qian's sweet voice said frostily, "Such a man is worst

than a beast, Imperial Protector Xiang, kill him for me!”

Although Lady Ya felt that it's inappropriate, she dared not interrupt for fear that Xiang Shaolong will misunderstand that she is trying to protect Prince Shaoyuan.

Xiang Shaolong deliberately revealed a cold and cruel smile and looked at Lady Pingyuan challengingly.

Lady Pingyuan looked as if she has suddenly aged, and she cried out, “Fine! What do you want before you'll let my son go?”

Xiang Shaolong turned his head and looked at Zhao Qian, asking with a straight face, “Will Third Princess allow your subordinate to handle this matter totally?”

Zhao Qian's pretty face blushed and dared not look at him but she lowered her head and nodded slightly. Xiang Shaolong saw how gentle this beauty is and other ideas rose in his head, but he remembered that she is going to marry a Wei and thought it such a pity. He turned his head back towards Lady Pingyuan and said, “I can stop pursuing this matter, but Lady must write a letter of guarantee that Prince Shaoyuan must never again harbor such beastly thoughts towards Princess. What does Lady think?”

Lady Pingyuan gritted her teeth so hard that her silver tooth casing almost cracked. This move of Xiang Shaolong is really formidable, such that she is forced into never bringing this up in from of the King of Zhao to complain against him.

Xiang Shaolong is extremely confident, because he knows

that she still need to make use of him to assassinate the King of Wei so he's not worried that she will not concede.

Lady Pingyuan was silent for a moment before she finally admitted defeat, "Fine! You're good."

Xiang Shaolong smiled and said, "The one who is good is Lady, I am just a little lucky."

CHAPTER 4
The War Between A Male And Female
[Translated by JEAN]

THE NEXT DAY when the envoy was getting ready to leave, Lady Pingyuan remained unmoved and refused to leave with the team. Xiang Shaolong laughed secretly to himself and brought with him Zhao Da and the other three as well as 10 odd specially trained elite soldiers, went to pay a visit to Lady Pingyuan personally. When they reached the tent, Xiang Shaolong told his men to stand guard outside while he went to see Lady Pingyuan alone.

Lady Pingyuan was still furious and she said with a frosty

look, “Xiang Shaolong you’re good, you’ve injured my son so badly.”

Xiang Shaolong knows that she was talking about the hard kick he gave to the groin. He secretly laughed to himself but when he spoke, he sighed instead, “I didn’t know he is Prince Shaoyuan at all in the darkness. Luckily I realized in time or I would have killed him.”

Lady Pingyuan was at a loss for words, but her anger was still unappeased so she stared at him and said, “My son is still weak and is not suited for long travels, you can go to Daliang on your own! I will only leave when he has recovered.”

Xiang Shaolong looked at her fiery eyes filled with hatred and sighed, “I am in a difficult position and have no choice but to put on an act in front of Zhao Qian. Actually I’ve considered what Lady told me the other day and have come to a decision long ago.”

Lady Pingyuan was stunned for a moment, and this ignited Xiang Shaolong’s hope. She eyed him for a moment before she nodded and said, “If you really have such a thought...”

Xiang Shaolong interrupted her, “But what Prince Shaoyuan did last night was obviously done with your approval, and this has aroused my doubts about Lady’s sincerity.”

Lady Pingyuan immediately lost the upper hand. In actual fact ever since Xiang Shaolong seemed to foretell her plan, which she was so confident of and spoil it, she has started fearing him and has no idea how she should deal with this man. Her instinctive reaction was to lower her eyes.

Xiang Shaolong saw that she did not try to deny and knows that she is now confused by his forcefulness. He moved boldly forward, looking closely at her tired yet pretty face and said with a smile, "Shall we talk about this after we reach Daliang? At least you should let me see Prince Xinling first!"

Lady Pingyuan saw her standing so close to her and she lifted her head, her face frosty as she said, "Are you trying to be rude to me? How dare you insult your superior?"

Xiang Shaolong said calmly, "I just have a secret to tell Lady, but I do not know if Lady is interested in hearing it."

Lady Pingyuan was thrown off guard and she asked, "What is it?"

Xiang Shaolong moved his lips closer, so close that it was only inches away from her, and deliberately pretended to be mysterious as he said, "I don't know if it was Zhao Mu who leaked out news, but a few groups of horse thieves including Hui Hu are waiting within Wei's border for us, and I heard Lady is one of their targets."

Lady Pingyuan's face turned pale and she exclaimed hoarsely, "What?"

Xiang Shaolong said with a straight face, "I, Xiang Shaolong, can swear to heaven. If I speak a word of falsehood, then let me die a horrible death."

He secretly thought that people of this era is not like those in the 21st century, they will not give their vows so easily and

now he is witnessing the miraculous use of this method.

Lady Pingyuan did not suspect his words as expected. She rolled her eyes for a while before she asked weakly, "Is Hui Hu really part of it?"

By now Xiang Shaolong is absolutely sure that Hui Hu is the King of Wei's man, and because Lady Pingyuan knows this secret, all the more she believes his words. He boldly sat down to her right, his mouth moved close to her ear, almost touching it and said, "The news was relayed to me by the spies the Wu family planted in Wei. They even said the mastermind could very well be the King of Wei himself."

Lady Pingyuan furrowed her brows and said, "Can you sit a little further away to talk?"

Xiang Shaolong saw that although she looked irritated, her pretty face was blushing and her breathing was faster and knows she's feeling confused whether to reject or welcome him. He can't help but secretly laugh and was even more determined to seek his revenge. He thought to himself, since you can be unscrupulous towards me, why can't I have a little payback, and he gently kissed her rounded ear lobes.

Lady Pingyuan's dainty body shook, and was about to reprimand him when Xiang Shaolong retreated to his original position, his mesmerizing eyes looking at her deeply. Her heart immediately started pounding, and the reprimand she was about to utter stuck in her throat.

What is happening? This person injured her son and outraged her modesty, but why didn't she react? Once she

thought of this, her face burned and she lowered her face and said quietly, "Fine! We will leave with you."

When Xiang Shaolong returned to his troops who were all packed and ready to leave, he added Wu Zhuo's 100 men into his group, thus increasing his control. These 100 family warriors were well built and alert, and with one look anyone can tell that they're elite fighters.

Cheng Xu who has been nervous and apprehensive all this while seems to have been finally reassured, and his smile is a lot more radiant now. Xiang Shaolong set the trap last night as if he could predict Prince Shaoyuan's evil plot, and this has raised him to almost a god-like status amongst the soldiers. While waiting for Lady Pingyuan's men to dismantle camp, Xiang Shaolong, Wu Zhuo, Cheng Xu and Zha Yuanyu went to a nearby hill to look at the map and discuss the route to take to Daliang.

Wu Zhuo is very familiar with the geography of Wei and he said, "From here to Tangyin, we have official roads which we can travel on. In the past the Weis set up gantries and camps along the roads, and there are watchtowers on higher grounds as well. But according to our scout, not only are the gantries missing along the road now, but we can't even find a single Wei to ask around."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that if the King of Wei really intends to send someone to attack him, he will not want to do it too far away from the Zhao border so that he will be able to push all the blame and say that the thieves

went after them from the Zhao border. Especially when Hui Hu has a personal feud with Xiang Shaolong, so this excuse can be used to shut the Zhaos up and at the same time deal a great blow to Prince Xinling. Hai! All those in power in this era are all conniving people. But he thought about the politicians in the 21st century and felt that maybe it's not so strange after all.

Cheng Xu pointed at the river, which forked from the Yellow River, flowing across Tangyin and said, "After we past the river, there's another official road that goes from the east straight towards another large city, Huangcheng, next to the Yellow River. If we were to travel there instead, won't the horse thieves be least expecting that?"

Xiang Shaolong said somberly, "If I'm the horse thief, I will certainly launch an attack while you are crossing the river. They came well prepared and outnumber us, so the outcome of the fight is predictable."

The other three were dumbfounded. Everyone knows that when crossing rivers, there's no way to defend oneself on the river as the boats are totally exposed to the enemy's catapults, and it'll be a perfect opportunity for the horse thieves to attack.

Xiang Shaolong is a soldier who went through vigorous training and after thinking for a while; he said decidedly, "No matter which official road we choose, we will still fall into the enemy's expectations. The other party's energy is conserved while waiting for us but we will be tired from the

travels. The only way is to change this obvious advantage and make the enemy tired instead. That's the only way we can win with our fewer numbers."

He paused for a moment before continuing with confidence, "Now we'll still travel south on the official roads but we will not cross the river when we come to it. Instead we will travel east along the water until we reach the inlets. This is certainly not within the enemy's expectations and they will have to come after us via the river crossing while we set up camp next to the river and wait for the enemy. This will greatly increase our chances of winning."

Zha Yuanyu commented, "But that is not an easy route to travel on..."

Wu Zhuo interrupted him, "As long as we can keep our lives, we will be able to overcome any difficult routes."

Cheng Xu agreed, "That's decided then! We'll increase the number of scouts who will keep a lookout on the front, back, left and right of the group. I'd rather travel slowly than to fall into a trap."

After the decision was made, the large group continued on their journey. Xiang Shaolong personally chose a team of fit soldiers to be the scouts and they were separated into five in each team, with two teams each in front, at the back, the left and right, a total of eight teams. They will use flags to signal to the main group once it's safe.

By dusk, they're only a day's journey away from the river. They chose a high ground that is easy to defend but difficult

to be attacked against to set up camp.

Xiang Shaolong did not sleep at all last night so he took the opportunity to hide in the tent and have a good sleep. When he woke up the surroundings were in total darkness. Beneath the blanket he sniffed a fragrance and felt a soft body. He lit his lamp and saw that it was Lady Ya who was leaning against him fully clothed and sleeping.

Lady Ya was awoken by the glare from the lamp and she complained, "You! Sleeping like a dead pig. It'll be terrible if there's an enemy attack."

Xiang Shaolong laughed, "Are you the enemy?"

He felt refreshed but extremely famished, before he remembered that he had not eaten.

Lady Ya heard his tummy rumbling and laughed as she got up, "I came especially to send you your dinner, hai! It's all cold now."

Xiang Shaolong's mood was greatly improved and allowed this beauty who has always been served by others to serve him as he dines. By the time his stomach was full, it's already morning.

They continued on the journey, following the official road down south towards the river, with lolling hills and woods surrounding them, the scenery breathtaking.

Lady Pingyuan became a lot more cooperative and the carriage that was carrying her and her injured son traveled closely behind Zhao Qian's group while their 200 family

warriors followed right at the back.

Ever since the conversation that morning, Xiang Shaolong has not spoken to this venomous woman. He wonders if she is thinking of any nefarious plot again. When he went past Zhao Qian's carriage, the pretty Zhao princess lifted up the curtain and called out daintily, "Xiang Shaolong!"

Ever since they left Handan, this is the first time she initiated a talk with him. Xiang Shaolong was surprised. He slowed his horse down and traveled alongside the carriage. He looked at her bright and pretty eyes and asked, "Princess, what instructions do you have!"

Zhao Qian boldly looked at him in the eyes for a moment before lowering her head, "Xiang Shaolong! I'm very grateful to you, but I hate you as well."

She lowered the curtain as soon as she said this, cutting off his direct and greedy gaze.

Xiang Shaolong has mixed feelings. As a Casanova, of course he understood the hidden meaning in her words. By calling his name directly, it's obvious that she is treating him as a man who can be a match to her royalty. She's grateful to him because he protected her chastity but she hates him because he's giving her away to the Weis. Although it's an imperial decree that cannot be disobeyed, she can't help but feel upset with him. Feeling dejected, Xiang Shaolong can only try to concentrate on the passing scenery.

In this world 2000 years ago, the world outside the cities still preserved an alluring primitive look. It not for the fact that

winter is approaching. They'll certainly see herds of animals strolling along the grasslands. This road is mainly along the lower hills or across flat open plains so although in the distance there were cliffs and mountains, dense forests and woods, the route they took is a quiet and peaceful road. They turned around a little hill and on their left a small lake as still as a mirror suddenly appeared. The water in the lake was jade green without any waves, serene and clear, and in the early morning fog it looked especially enchanting. On the opposite bank green hills lined the distance, with green bamboos and trees, looking very delicate.

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought it a pity, if he is on a tour, he'll certainly stay here for a few days. Even after they've left the little lake, the pretty scene was still etched deeply in his mind. But very soon he was attracted by another valley they passed.

There were unique looking cliffs in the valley, the rocks lined intricately, the forest dense and once in a while a strange animal would appear. A stream was flowing down the cliff and under the sunlight, the water and rocks seems to be moving, the illusion captivating.

Xiang Shaolong suddenly had a strange thought. If Crazy Ma's time machine can really send people back to the past and present freely, then all he has to do is set up a tour agency and he'll be able to earn big bucks. As he went on imagining, his mood became better and by dusk, they finally reached the northern bank of the river.

The scenery that appeared was enough to captivate a time traveler like him. He is the only one who understands that the damage done to earth 2000 years later can be so unacceptable. The river was about 60 odd meters wide, flowing between two huge rocks, with abundant weeds growing in the middle of the river. There was an unexplained beauty about the river.

Xiang Shaolong was totally engrossed with enjoying the scene until Cheng Xu reminded him and he gave the orders to set up camp next to the water. Without waiting for his instructions, Wu Zhuo had already sent someone to climb up the highest cliff to study the surroundings. On the surface, everything looks peaceful, and birds and animals would come and drink from the river occasionally, or even mingle around with their mules, enjoying the sweet river water.

The camp he set up this time is the '6 petals camp', with the commander's tent and the ladies' tents, including Lady Pingyuan's right in the middle of the camp while the rest of the troops are split into six groups surrounding the central camp, like a flower with six petals. Naturally the circumference is still protected by the carriages joined together and the horses and mules were enclosed next to the river.

By the time everything was settled, the sky is slowly getting darker and the various camps started their fires and smoke was seen everywhere. Xiang Shaolong, Wu Zhuo and Cheng Xu climbed up a huge rock to examine the happenings at the opposite bank.

They could hear the sounds of animals and birds fleeing in alarm from the woods on the opposite shore. The three of the exchanged glances and smiled, secretly thinking that they've had a close shave.

Cheng Xu said, "Yuanyu will find some men and pretend to build rafts and let the thieves think that we will cross the river tomorrow morning."

He continued with a bitter smile, "Tonight may be the last night of peace."

Wu Zhuo said, "The thieves will surely have men hidden on this side as well. When we change our route tomorrow and heard east along the river, will they give chase in a moment of anxiousness?"

Xiang Shaolong smiled, "Wu Zhuo, make a guess who could it be that's keeping an eye out for us at the bank opposite?"

Without a thought Wu Zhuo replied, "Of course it's Hu Hui. They're the strongest amongst the horse thieves and have the capability of attacking us during the day. If it's Xiao Weimou, he would not dare to openly launch an attack with a thousand troops within the borders of Wei. At the most he will use the strategy of attacking at night or with fire."

Xiang Shaolong laughed, "Knowing yourself and your enemy is the way of winning battles. This is the famous words of the great militarist Old Sun, so how can we let this opportunity to make him fall badly pass."

Wu Zhuo and Cheng Xu's eyes immediately shone.

Xiang Shaolong continued, "Besides, we have an added advantage. Hu Hui does not know that we have an extra 100 elite soldiers. Just based on that we can make Hu Hui fall on his nose and when he breaths out, his beard would all be gray (hui = gray)."

He lowered his voice and revealed his plan. Wu Zhuo and Cheng Wei were exclaiming how brilliant the plan was after they heard it. Xiang Shaolong asked offhandedly, "Why is it that we've traveled for a few days but we don't even see a single Wei village, it's as if we're in no-man's land now."

Cheng Xu replied, "This is the King of Wei's orders, the areas 50 li around official roads are not to be inhabited, for fear that when enemies travel past the official roads, they can plunder the villages for food, women and men."

Xiang Shaolong was enlightened and after going through the details of their mission a few more times, they returned to camp.

That night he had dinner at Lady Ya's tent and Xiao Zhao and the rest of the maids served them happily. They even helped him bath and change and he was enjoying himself amongst the bevy of beauties so much that his weariness was all gone.

While he was hugging Lady Ya and lying on the rug, she caressed his broad and muscular chest and said, "I really don't understand how you can predict that Prince Shaoyuan will launch a secret attack on Zhao Qian, and I don't understand why they'll want to do that?"

Xiang Shaolong was silent for a moment before he came to a decision, and told her about him overhearing the conversation between Lady Pingyuan and her son.

Lady Ya's pretty face turned pale on hearing this and the first thing she said was, "What a good Prince Xinling, to make me think that he's really missing me, so he's trying to harm me instead."

Xiang Shaolong sighed, "You can't say that he does not miss you. If I really killed the King of Wei, won't you still end up being his?"

Lady Ya was at a loss and asked while hugging him tightly, "What shall we do now?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "With me here, what do you have to fear? He has his plans of Zhang Liang, but I have wall ascending ladders, humph!"

Lady Ya furrowed her brows as she asked, "What is 'plans of Zhang Liang and wall ascending ladders'?"

Only now did Xiang Shaolong remember that Zhang Liang was a person who appeared at the end of the Qin era and the beginning of Han, so he's not born at this time yet. He was dumbfounded and laughed in reply, "Anyway this is called acting according to circumstances. As long as the Weis dare not out rightly make an enemy of us, I am confident of returning home with our lives."

Lady Ya asked, "Why is Lady Pingyuan suddenly listening to you, it is because..."

Xiang Shaolong slapped her butt warningly and said, "Don't let your thoughts wander. I just analyzed to her the situation."

Lady Ya giggled, "Of course I believe you, Lady Pingyuan may be vicious but she's very uptight about relations between men and women. I just wonder if you can make her break her defenses. Don't forget that even Zhao Ni was unable to escape from your evil clutches!"

Xiang Shaolong said honestly, "I did flirt with her a little. In order to survive, and under this major rule of thumb, I am willing to do anything."

Before he finished his words, Xiao Zhao came in and said, "Lady Pingyuan would like to invite Master Xiang over!"

Lady Pingyuan was seated along in her tent, her hair piled high up in a bun and affixed with a gold hairpiece. She was wearing a long brocade outfit with light makeup on her face, looking absolutely radiant.

Xiang Shaolong can't help but secretly compliment this woman for knowing how to dress up, mainly because she is a born clothes rack, and looks good in anything she wears. She must have been an alluring thing when she was young, a pity that she is so vicious.

When she saw Xiang Shaolong arriving, she said nonchalantly, "Imperial Protector, please take a seat!"

Xiang Shaolong loves flirting with especially alluring women, and she still looks so young, so he smiled and said, "Can I sit

anywhere?”

Lady Pingyuan stared at him, “Imperial Protector, you are getting more and more discourteous with me.”

She stared at him fiercely again, as if reprimanding him for licking her earlobe the other day.

Xiang Shaolong looked at her expression and knows that she is going to play along with his plan, thinking of changing her strategy to a softer one to trap him. But he is not afraid at all.

Matters between men and women are like playing with fire, and one can burn oneself if he’s not careful. It’s still an unknown whether Lady Pingyuan will really fall for him in the end.

Xiang Shaolong is not willing to press her too hard so he went to her side and lied down. Lying on the soft rug, he stretched lazily and gave a satisfied sigh.

Lady Pingyuan turned her head around and looked at Xiang Shaolong who was lying now next to her and asked coldly, “Xiang Shaolong! Stop playing games, what do you want?”

Xiang Shaolong deliberately breathed in deeply twice and said, “Lady smells so nice!”

There’s nothing Lady Pingyuan can do to him, and suppressing the urge to slap him angrily, she said, “Answer me quickly!”

Xiang Shaolong felt all these exchanges exciting and said,

“Right now I only want one person, Lady should know who that person is?”

Lady Pingyuan calmed down and nodded her head, “Fine! If you answer one question of mine, and if I find the answer satisfactory, I will make a guess who is the person you want.”

A person of her status, by saying that is akin to agreeing to give her body to the other party. Xiang Shaolong has eavesdropped on her conversation with her son before and naturally knows that this woman has a sweet tongue but hidden daggers so he said with a smile, “Matters between men and women are not a transaction, so how can you lay down rules beforehand. Besides it’s up to you to decide if my answer is satisfactory, so please forgive your subordinate for not accepting it.”

Lady Pingyuan’s gaze turned glacier and stared at him, “Xiang Shaolong, are you feeling guilty? that’s why you don’t even dare to answer a question?”

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that she should be the guilty one and said, “Who has no guilt? Those without guilt has gone to seen the King of Hell a long time ago.”

Lady Pingyuan has lived most of her life as royalty, and now she is in an esteemed status so how can she tolerate such behavior. She felt extremely unhappy, yet she also felt an excitement she’s never felt before.

All along, she has always remained emotionless as she carried out her plans that can benefit her. She has always

never cared much about relationships between men and women. When she married Prince Pingyuan, all she thought was the possibility of him replacing the King of Zhao. Marriage to her is just a transaction. Therefore she never allowed other men to flirt with her at all. This time she met the young and handsome Xiang Shaolong. And although she was a little attracted by his appearance, what moved her heart were his strong will and high handed ways as well as his unique charisma. Strangely it made her want to bow down to one stronger than her. And slowly but surely he is advancing towards her. Now she feels as if she cannot take it any more, and yet she feels greatly excited by it all. Such dilemma is making her feel lost. By now she has forgotten that Xiang Shaolong is only a useful pawn.

Xiang Shaolong could tell that this is her only weakness, that's why he deliberately used such methods to deal with her. The two of them stared at each other, neither wanting to back down.

Xiang Shaolong feels no love towards her at all, but her high and mighty regal status as well as her radiant and mature outlook stirred up his lust. Of course mixed with it is a strong feeling of revenge. He felt that no matter what he does to this vicious woman, there's no need to be responsible for it. And her dangerous nature is in itself a very strong lure.

He sat up and moved nearer, until he lightly touched Lady Pingyuan's untouchable pale arms and slender legs before he stopped. With less than two to three inches between them, he looked at her challengingly, looking at her eyes,

which showed the conflict in her emotions.

Lady Pingyuan furrowed her brows tightly and said quietly, "Xiang Shaolong! Aren't you going too far?"

Secretly hating that touch that made her lose all her senses. Although Xiang Shaolong has the intention to flirt with her, he understands that for women like her who think so highly of themselves, the most important thing is to know when to stop, and he must strip her of her defenses bit by bit.

He stood up and said with a laugh, "It seems that Lady has not gathered the courage to accept real happiness."

And he left the tent.

Lady Pingyuan jumped up and cried out daintily, "Xiang Shaolong!"

Xiang Shaolong stopped in his steps and turned around, his heated eyes roaming about her body a few times before asking respectfully, "Does Lady has any instructions?"

Lady Pingyuan stamped her feet and said, "You have not answered my question, I won't allow you to leave, or else just you wait and see what will happen when we reach Daliang."

Xiang Shaolong walked towards her, his gaze and smile filled with conquering her.

Lady Pingyuan was at a loss and actually took three steps back and for the first time revealed the weakness of a lady.

Xiang Shaolong almost touched her bosom before he

stopped; and reaching out his steady and strong hand, caught hold of her chin and forced her to look up at him.

The skin under his fingers felt extremely tender. The light wrinkles around her eyes became a strange lure instead. Lady Pingyuan's hands were clasped tightly around her sleeves, her breathing quickening. The fragrance blowing directly on the other party's face. She very much wanted to close her eyes but she knows that once she does that, the other party will take a further step forward in her molestation. At this point in time she still finds it difficult to accept the idea although her physical reactions tell of a different thing altogether. She deliberately thought of how he injured her son, but still she can't find the heart to hate this man. In fact she felt the strong pressure exerted by the other party.

Xiang Shaolong said gently, "Lady, just ask! If I answer you honestly, Lady must allow me a kiss and you must not try to deny me that."

Lady Pingyuan's heart thumped wildly and she felt at a loss as well as extremely furious. However her body seemed to be leaning forward so she lifted her slender hand and pushed against his muscular chest but the other party did not move at all.

Xiang Shaolong felt the excitement of taking advantage of a superior and released his hold on her chin, changing to grab her tender hand which besides the dead Prince Pingyuan, no one else has touched before. He first forced her hands down

and pushed it behind her before hugging her, sticking close to her thighs. Lady Pingyuan moaned quietly, her voluptuous body immediately leaned into him, pressing against him totally.

Xiang Shaolong was afraid that she might not be able to take the excitement so he distracted her by saying, "Speak! Xiang Shaolong is all ears."

Lady Pingyuan's body trembled and like a frightened bird struggled for a moment but of course this did nothing to change the situation. She lifted her head and looked at Xiang Shaolong, stammering, "What are you doing?"

Xiang Shaolong suppressed the urge to squeeze her and said, "If Lady is not going to ask the question, I am going to leave."

Lady Pingyuan could not withstand it any longer and with a groan, collapsed limply against him and uttered, "Xiang Shaolong! I want you to tell me, why were you able to set up a trap to harm my son?"

Xiang Shaolong had long guessed that she is going to ask this same question as Lady Ya, and with Lady Pingyuan's intellect she will certainly suspect that he has overheard their conversation. Then that would mean their other plans to deal with Xiang Shaolong has been revealed as well. If she does not clarify this point, how can she lure him? He was secretly cursing that this woman is ultimately still trying to cause him his death. He thought that no matter how interested she is in him, it would never be greater than her thirst for power. He smiled and said, "The person I wanted

to deal with is not your son at all. It's just that the man I placed in a secret location realized there are outsiders nearby and their numbers are not large, so I guessed they might be planning something against Princess. I just did not expect Young Master to be involved in this as well!"

This is a very good reply, and very reasonable as well. Because Wu Zhuo's men are elite soldiers that Lady Pingyuan did not expect. Lady Pingyuan was relieved and her fake composure returned. She lifted her pretty face and was about to say something when Xiang Shaolong's mouth pressed down, sealing her sweet lips.

If Xiang Shaolong does not know about her evil plots, he will never touch even a hair on the mother of his enemy. Because he's afraid he'll be entangled in a messy relationship. But now it's a game of plotting against each other, each using their own tricks, so there's no emotional barrier at all. Instead, he felt the joy and excitement of taking advantage of his enemy's mother as revenge. Her body is still filled with life and suppleness, and doesn't feel old at all. Under the flirting of his lips and tongue, Lady Pingyuan's reactions started to heat up. At the most intoxicating and exciting moment, Xiang Shaolong released his hold on her sweet lips, hands and body, moved back and with a bow, said with a smile, "Thank you Lady for your favor."

He ignored her silent look asking him to stay and left the tent. But he could still smell the fragrance of her body.

CHAPTER 5
Fighting Off Enemies At The River
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG and Wu Zhuo's 100 men, with strong bows in their hands, lied low in a dense forest about a hundred steps away from the camp, looking at the slowly leaving troops in the gradually brightening sky.

When the sky was bright, Cheng Xu's men had already disappeared around the bend at the lower stream.

After a moment, sounds of hooves and men talking were heard on both sides of the river.

A group of almost 400 horse thieves rode out from a dense

forest at the upper stream while on the opposite bank a large group of surprised thieves ran out. One of them was sitting high atop a horse, with a wave of long and coarse gray beard, and he is indeed the most famous horse thief roaming the Zhao borders, Hu Hui.

He was so furious. His eyeballs were almost bulging out and kept hurrying his men to move the rafts for crossing the river out from the hiding place so that they can go after their enemies. Obviously they have lost their footing.

Sounds of hooves were heard, the horse thieves on this side of the river are already riding hard along the river.

The horse thieves on the other side are starting to cross the river.

Xiang Shaolong took a peek at Wu Zhuo and saw that in this dangerous and tense situation, he still maintained his cool and was secretly impressed.

20 odd wooden rafts, with war horses and other equipment on it came crossing the river.

When Hu Hui's men ferried two batches of close to 400 warhorses and rations, they began to ferry the men across the river.

Hu Hui was on one of the wooden rafts.

By now, on this side of the river there were only about 50 to 60 horse thieves and totally unwary as they were busy moving the horses to the flat plains next to the river bank.

Xiang Shaolong gave a hand signal and a hundred odd men released a wave of arrows from the dense forest, causing chaos amongst the enemy and the horses and more than half their men were taken down.

Hu Hui and the rest were panicking as they hurriedly cocked their arrows to return fire. The small group of soldiers left on the bank screamed and scattered in all directions.

Xiang Shaolong and his men have by now moved behind the rocks next to the bank and the sound of bows clanging were heard as the light arrows flew like locusts towards the horse thieves on the rafts that had nothing to cover them at all.

There was no way the horse thieves could avoid the arrows and fresh blood stained the rafts and river red.

Hu Hui hurriedly gave orders to retreat to the opposite bank.

Everyone aimed at him and a flurry of arrows flew towards this obvious target.

Although the horse thieves held the wooden oars high up, they were unable to block the hundreds of arrows and fell one by one.

Hu Hui saw that the situation was amiss and with an angry roar, jumped into the water and hid under the wooden raft.

The other thieves copied his move and all jumped into the water.

There were about 200 horse thieves still on the opposite bank but besides jumping and shouting, there's nothing they

can do as well.

The light arrows shot into the water, fresh blood kept bubbling up from the water, followed by bodies floating up. The scene looked totally brutal.

It's either you perish or I'll die, this has always been a rock hard fact in wars.

The wooden rafts were broken and the pieces flowed downstream.

Xiang Shaolong was worried about the situation at Cheng Xu's side so he gave the orders to retreat, ignoring whether Hu Hui was dead or alive. They went up the warhorses they stole and led the horses equipped with rations downstream.

By now the battle at Cheng Xu's side is coming to an end as well.

When they reached a suitable site downstream, they used the carriages as a line of defense and Zha Yuanyu also led 400 men and spread out around the dense woods nearby, waiting for the pursuing thieves.

400 horse thieves came rushing along the river and they had just turned the corner when they saw the waiting Zhao soldiers but by then they have already fallen within shooting distance of the hiding soldiers. Just as they were at a loss whether to advance or retreat, the Zhao soldiers who were under cover behind the carriages let out a volley of arrows together and immediately men and horses felled.

The remaining men were unable to retreat in time and when

they were thinking of going around the carriages via the side stream, Zha Yuanyu and his 400 hidden soldiers shot at them, causing total chaos among them.

As they hurriedly retreated, they bumped into Xiang Shaolong's reinforcements and were caught totally unawares. Less than 50 managed to escape by abandoning their horses and gear, running into the woods next to the bank.

Under this great victory, all the soldiers cheered, even those from the Pingyuan family shared this victorious atmosphere.

On Xiang Shaolong's side only 40 odd men were injured, but none of the injuries serious. The outcome was something to be proud of and once again it proved that Xiang Shaolong has an excellent military mind and flexible and effective ways of warring.

Xiang Shaolong sent 20 men to send the 300 odd warhorses they captured back to Zhao, but kept the weapons and rations for his own use. After tending to the injured soldiers, they continued to travel west along the river.

By the time they pitched tents at dusk, they're only about two and a half days away from the inner river.

Because the road along the journey was uneven and they've just had a short skirmish, the men and horses were all tired. Everyone was trying to get as much rest as possible and no one was talking throughout the night. Early the next morning they continued on their journey.

The scenery changed again, the mountains rose and fell in the distance, the trees and grass grew lushly and everything looked like a painting. Streams flowed between the mountains, with waterfalls, captivating one's eyes.

At the side is a huge and primitive forest with gigantic trees that even a few strong men holding hands won't be able to go around its circumference.

Sounds of animals and insects could be heard coming from the forest, and the Zhao soldiers hunted some wild foxes and rabbits on the way to add to their dinner.

Sometimes they will come to a high point and from there they can see the unending plains and forests.

Once in a while they will see an isolated village or farm amongst the tall grass and to Xiang Shaolong, everywhere he looks seems to be a paradise. He does not understand why humans still want to fight, and can only blame it on their inherent greed and evil nature.

Although the scenery is beautiful, the journey was arduous. Not only they need to manually open up a path, many times they have to use tree trunks to pave the roads before they can travel in between the streams.

They traveled less than 10 li the whole day, and in the end set up camp at the top of a hill.

Although they were tired, the soldiers were all in high spirits, and very willing to carry out any orders from Xiang Shaolong.

Beauties will always love heroes, so Lady Ya is all the more

conceding towards him, letting him enjoy the gentleness of this exceptional creature.

Ever since Zhao Qian spoke to him that day through the window, she has been consciously avoiding him. He has no choice but to allow this situation to continue and did not make any moves to break this stalemate.

After his meal, Lady Pingyuan sent someone to invite him over again, saying there's something to discuss.

Xiang Shaolong was also curious as to her present attitude, so he hurriedly went to Lady Pingyuan's private tent.

Who would have expected that Lady Pingyuan would put two family warriors in her tent, and he was greatly disappointed, all naughty thoughts disappeared totally.

His relationship with Lady Pingyuan is truly a battle of wills between the two sexes. It gave him a feeling of committing something wrong, which gives him a stronger feeling of excitement.

Besides, which man would not like new and fresh things, much less a flirtatious man like Xiang Shaolong?

Lady Pingyuan was sitting on the floor rug with her guards up. And after inviting him for a seat, she stared at him angrily and said, "This time we should be able to have a proper conversation!"

Naturally Xiang Shaolong understood her meaning. He was secretly feeling irritated but on the surface he had no choice but to say respectfully, "Lady, please give your instructions!"

Lady Pingyuan stared at him again, a look filled with hate and love, but she said icily, "Now that we're far away from the main road, where are we going actually?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "The journey has been difficult, Lady must have suffered. We are going to the river's inlets first, before following the river towards Daliang."

Lady Pingyuan suddenly sighed and leaned a little closer, saying quietly, "If you... I can make them leave."

Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic and hurriedly nodded his head in agreement.

Lady Pingyuan dismissed the two guards and after staring at him for a moment, she said after some thought, "You really are an exceptionally rare talent. Now no one will disbelieve that you once fought off Hu Hui's 800 horse thieves with 50 men."

Xiang Shaolong smiled, "The horse thieves are just a motley crew of men, and it's easy to win them."

Lady Pingyuan shook her head, "Some people are born leaders, not only can they make warriors work for them, but they can also emerge victorious with their soldiers, never losing. You are one such person."

Xiang Shaolong has no idea what she is up to again, so he can only humbly accept the compliments.

Lady Pingyuan's pretty face suddenly blushed and she lowered her head and said, "After passing the river inlets, and about 20 day's journey towards the southeast, you will

reach Pushui. And if continue south down the river, you will reach Fengqiu in 10 days. That city's general Guan Po is my man. We'll be out of danger once we reach that place."

Xiang Shaolong replied, "Your subordinate will definitely follow Lady's instructions."

He added curiously, "Why is Lady's tender and smooth face suddenly blushing?"

Lady Pingyuan blushed all the way to her neck and said, "Are you back to your old ways again? Now scram."

Xiang Shaolong saw that she was embarrassed and he felt pleased. He got up with a grin and with a bow, said, "Your subordinate takes his leave!"

But his feet seem to have taken root and did not move at all.

Of course Lady Pingyuan doesn't really mean to chase him away and seeing that his legs are not moving at all, she asked happily, "Why aren't you leaving yet?"

Xiang Shaolong smiled evilly, "Isn't Lady going to give your subordinate a little reward?"

Lady Pingyuan was feeling utterly confused, and after looking at him for a moment, lowered her pretty face.

Xiang Shaolong walked over and knelt down behind her. His hands reached out and with a little pull, this regal lady fell into his arms weakly and once again he managed to enjoy her sweet lips.

This time Xiang Shaolong took it a step further. His two

hands caressed her bosom.

Lady Pingyuan's body shook violently as she held his evil-doing hands in a death grip and moaned daintily, "Xiang Shaolong!"

Xiang Shaolong understands very well that the most precious thing is something that cannot be obtained. By luring her bit by bit, is the best way to ensure that she won't be able to harden her heart to harm him after they reach Daliang. So he stopped moving his hands and after having his fill of kissing her, he left, leaving this beautiful woman to spend the lonely night alone.

For the next 20 odd days, they continued traveling east and passed the inner river and the west river. They passed one of the big cities in Wei, Puyang but did not enter it, choosing to travel south on the official road from Puyang directly to Pushui.

After passing these few days in peace, their scouts once again found traces of their enemies scout, making them aware that danger is once again looming.

They have lots of carriages and horses, and have to repair those faulty carriages often so their pace is as slow as a snail. There's no way they can throw the enemies off their back so they can only pray that these nameless enemies will not be as formidable as Hu Hui.

By now they are close to Daliang, and there are many official stops along the official road and every 10 li or so they will see the Weis military barracks.

The attitude of the Wei soldiers was strange. After looking at their documents, although they did not try to make things difficult, but they refused to send troops to escort them, so when they reached the end of the official road, they have no choice but to travel east towards Pushui.

Three days later they left the mountain track and reached a large grassy plain on the western bank of Pushui but they need to travel another two days before they can reach Pushui.

The huge group stopped at the side of the grass plain.

Xiang Shaolong, Wu Zhuo, Cheng Xu and Zha Yuanyu walked to a side for some discussion, their expressions all somber.

Wu Zhuo said, "The enemies are now aware of our route and military strength but we have no information at all on the enemies that may attack us, which is the biggest fault in military with the enemy in the dark and us in the open."

Cheng Xu continued, "If the enemies were to attack, they'll surely do it within these two days, because on such flat plains, it's easier to attack than to defend. The enemies will definitely not miss such a good opportunity."

He continued with a bitter smile, "What I'm most afraid is the King of Wei will order his soldiers to disguise themselves as horse thieves and attack us. Then we'll be in very big trouble."

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows and after thinking hard for a moment, said, "This possibility that Cheng Xu has

raised, could very well become a fact. Since that is the case, we cannot just sit and wait for death.”

The three of them were all ears as they waited to hear what miraculous plan this brilliant strategist has to save their lives.

Xiang Shaolong said quietly, “We might as well find a sturdy and highland around here with a mountain backing us and start setting up tents and ditches. Store up on wild meat and spring water and stay here for half a month or so. On the other hand we’ll send out light cavalry to make their way towards Fengqiu, and beg the defending general Guan Po to send reinforcements. So even if the King of Wei has other nefarious plans, there’s nothing he can do.”

After much hard thinking, everyone decided this is the best plan they can come up with for a desperate situation.

Immediately after that Xiang Shaolong went to look for Lady Pingyuan to discuss the plan and through the bamboo curtains, he told her of the plan and the reason. Lady Pingyuan said quietly, “You’re more experienced than me in this area, you shall decide on everything.”

Xiang Shaolong has never heard her speak so gently and so obediently towards him before and he felt lust arising, so he asked, “Would Lady like me to visit you tonight?”

Lady Pingyuan sighed, “Shall we talk about this after we’ve reached Daliang? My son is already very unhappy that I was alone with you on a few occasions, and now that he is slowly recovering, I don’t want him to get upset over us.”

Xiang Shaolong thought of Prince Shaoyuan and his mood disappeared. He left her carriage and went to inform Lady Ya of the plan and told her to convey the message to Zhao Qian.

After scouting for half a day, they finally find a flat piece of highland with a mountain backing at a stream next to the plains and started setting up camp.

The whole army began busying themselves and at the same time they sent out 20 light cavalry carrying Lady Pingyuan's handwritten letter with her seal and went to Fengqiu via 10 different routes to ask for assistance.

The process of setting up camp this time is vastly different when compared to the past, with ditches being the main form of defense.

Along the circumference of the highland they dug ditches one foot deep and five feet wide. The soil that was dug out was piled in front of the ditches and stones were added, making it into a short mud wall about half a foot high, with holes in it for the usage of bows and arrows and it was quite sturdy. They then pushed the carts along the inner circle of the wall to fortify the wall against the force of the enemy's attacks.

Outside of the short wall, the slope was filled with sharpened bamboo stakes and holes to trip the horses. There was danger everywhere to deal with the strong attacks of the enemy.

The long grass and woods surrounding the area were

removed to prevent enemies from taking cover amongst them.

The camp itself was set up according to how it's usually done, in the shape of a crescent moon, with the main tents in the middle and the six armies split into both sides, forming a half circle with the front protruding out. The camp and the short wall were more than three feet apart so unless the wall has been taken over, the camp will be out of reach of the enemy's projectiles.

After busying themselves for three days, they've finally made the camp into one strong in defenses with the ditch on the outside, a rampart on the inside and pikes and holes outside the walls.

In order to prevent the enemy from using fire to attack, Xiang Shaolong dug ditches to connect the stream behind them into the camp. By the time everything was done, five days has passed.

That day when Xiang Shaolong was instructing his men to set aside rocks collected from the slope, the scouts returned to report that they found a group of horse thieves close to 10,000 in strength rushing through the flat plains.

Everyone understood in their hearts that this must be the enemy that has been waiting for them a long time in the plains without avail. Therefore they could not take it any longer and has come to attack them directly.

And this also proved that their guess was correct. No one will believe that there are no Wei soldiers mixed into the

group of enemy.

Although they know that to be the truth, they're still not sure why the King of Wei would want to be so ruthless, and the only explanation is that Prince Xinling is indeed a threat to his throne and he's thinking of using this to spoil the relations between Prince Xinling and the Zhaos. As for any other reasons, it something that they will not know. But the King of Wei is well known for being a useless king, so no one will find it strange that he'll actually do something so ridiculous.

The night passed peacefully and the next day, Xiang Shaolong instructed that besides the soldiers on duty, everyone else were to rest so that they can conserve their energy to deal with the enemy's attack.

Luckily they have kept a large amount of weapons, rations and arrows from Hui Hu and it's enough for them to stay besieged for half a month without having to worry about food and arrows.

Another advantage they have is that the enemy will not expect them to build a barricade so reasonably speaking they would not have brought equipment that can deal with barricades, so it will make their job defending much easier.

At dusk, the horse thieves could be seen appearing on the plains and they even set up camp. Obviously there's going to be a standoff between the two armies.

Xiang Shaolong scrutinized his enemy and exclaimed hoarsely, "Look! Isn't that Hu Hui?"

The others strained their eyes and saw a group of horse thieves riding nearer towards them, and the one leading them is indeed Hu Hui.

Cheng Xu exclaimed furiously, "From what is seen, Hu Hui does belong to the King of Wei and those horse thieves are Wei soldiers in disguise. Their job is to disrupt other state's financial and political stability. The Weis are really vicious!"

Zha Yuanyu shook his head and sighed, "I really do not understand why his Majesty would want to marry our prettiest princess to the Weis."

Cheng Xu warned him, "You'd better be careful with your words, if this goes to his Majesty's ears, you and your tribe will all be in big trouble."

Zha Yuanyu smiled bitterly, "Let's talk about it after we survive tonight!"

Xiang Shaolong knows that he has seen that the number of horse thieves is almost 10 times more than their troops and was feeling afraid. From that he can deduce that the others will feel the same as well and morale will definitely be affected. He furrowed his brow and came up with a plan. He told Cheng Xu, "Prepare a round of fire arrows for me. I might be using them tonight."

After he spoke, he returned to his tent, ignoring their querying looks. He collected his tools and walked towards the back of the camp.

At the area between the camp and the back of the

mountain, the mules and horses were separated into two huge wooden enclosures, leisurely drinking the clear water redirected from the stream and nibbling on the green grass.

Luckily this is only the beginning of winter, or those animals would be in big trouble if there's a huge snowstorm.

He lifted his head and studied closely the layout and shape of the cliffs and the nearby mountains and with the metal hooks, easily climbed up. He used a hammer to install the climbing rings that Guo Zhong made for him at the appropriate spots, moving towards the next mountain and attached a rough rope before climbing back to camp. As long as he can climb over the neighboring mountain, he can easily use this 'secret route' the drop down to the plains dozen of feet below and proceed with his secret mission. By the time he returned to the commander's tent, Cheng Xu came running towards him anxiously and said, "Come and take a look quickly!"

When he returned to the frontline, he saw that the horse thieves at the bottom were all at work, cutting down trees and putting a pile of sharpened stakes about a foot long on the ground in a row.

Wu Zhuo furrowed his brows and asked, "What are they trying to do?"

Xiang Shaolong has an idea on what it could be and exclaimed, "Those are the tools for attacking our mud city. They just have to line those trunks in a row on the slope then they need not fear the attack from our arrows and

rocks.”

Zha Yuanyu exclaimed, “This is a very effective move, they just need to have three rows of these together front and back, they need not fear even rolling rocks. Also, this would block our view of them and we won’t be able to see what they’re planning.”

Wu Zhuo laughed icily, “If they want to defeat this thing, they would first have to pay a horrible price.”

He continued with a sigh, “If only their strength was halved.”

What he meant was that, even if they sacrificed a lot of men, the remaining strength would still be enough to overrun and enter their barricades.

Xiang Shaolong laughed, “Don’t worry! The enemy made a biggest mistake, and that is to belittle their opponent. Look at their camp, there’s no defenses at all. The rations and horses are just abandoned behind there. If we can give them a good fire, their expressions will be very interesting to watch!”

Wu Zhuo and the rest furrowed their brows, looking at the packed thieves on the small hill below and secretly thought that it’s not them who belittle their opponent, but even a rat will find it difficult to slip out and set a fire to their camp.

Xiang Shaolong just smiled and did not explain any further. He returned to his tent for a rest.

After sleeping for four hours, it was dusk by the time he woke up. Lady Ya was waiting there quietly to have dinner

with him.

Xiang Shaolong sat up feeling refreshed and after freshening up; he ate three big bowls of rice.

Lady Ya looked at him curiously, "It seems that you're very confident, or else you won't be so excited and in high spirits? But I cannot think of why you would still be so confident of defeating the enemy this time."

Xiang Shaolong hugged her and laughed, "Is Ya'er afraid?"

Lady Ya happily kissed him before saying with a smile, "I really am a little afraid without you around, but after seeing you, I'm suddenly fearless. That's right! Go over to Zhao Qian's place! She said there's something she would like to beg of you."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that Zhao Qian is a bigger headache to him compared to the horse thieves.

After this pretty Third Princess dismissed her maids, she came to his side and said shyly, "Xiang Shaolong, can Zhao Qian borrow something from you?"

Xiang Shaolong was asked curiously, "What do you want to borrow?"

Zhao Qian suddenly opened her fair and tender palm and said quietly, "I want your personal dagger which you carry at all times."

Xiang Shaolong was perplexed, "Do you have so little confident in me? I will definitely send you to Daliang."

Zhao Qian's pretty eyes reddened and she stared at him with sadness and hatred before saying, "Zhao Qian does not want you to bring her to Daliang. Everywhere else is fine, but not to Daliang."

No words other than these can so clearly express the love she felt for Xiang Shaolong.

Hot blood rushed up Xiang Shaolong's veins and he blurted, "Fine! I promise you, even if I bring you to Daliang, I'll have a way to bring you back to Zhao whole and unblemished."

Zhao Qian was shocked, "Really!"

Xiang Shaolong can feel her pretty face light up, filled with hope and he gritted his teeth and replied, "This is a promise!"

After saying this sentence, he felt himself lightening up.

In truth, every since he found out the complicated situation in the Wei royal family, and knowing that the King of Zhao is going to steal the 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual', he felt that he cannot be the accomplice that helps to sacrifice Zhao Qian's lifelong happiness. Now that he has expressed his stand, that feeling is so great.

Zhao Qian was ecstatic, "Shaolong! Qian'er is really very grateful to you!"

Xiang Shaolong saw that her confidence in him is so much greater than his confidence in himself and felt happy about it. He took out his dagger and shoved it into her tiny hand, taking the chance to hold her soft hands and said, "Unless

it's the last choice available, you must not kill yourself with this dagger."

Zhao Qian blushed to her neck and held this love token tightly against her chest. She lowered her head and said with love, "Qian'er will listen to Shaolong's instructions."

Xiang Shaolong was captivated and was thinking of taking the opportunity to go a little further when the sounds of drums were heard coming from the foot of the mountain.

Looking at the situation at the foot of the mountain, the expression on Cheng Xu and the rest were ashen. Only Wu Zhuo maintained a calm composure.

The thieves had successfully lined the ground with rows of wooden stakes about two feet wide and surrounded all routes of escape at the foot of the mountain.

There's only a small gap in between the tied wooden stakes, only wide enough to allow a single person to pass, and he won't be able to go through if he's on a horse.

Lanterns were hung on the top of the stakes, illuminating the slope clearly.

Beyond the wooden stakes about 2000 horse thieves gathered, the 200 men at the forefront carrying a huge wooden shield as tall as a man, its ends pointed so that it can be driven into the ground too help block the attacks from falling rocks.

Another 200 odd men carried tools like shovels and hoes and it seems that they are first going to remove the obstructions

along the slope and fill up the ditches filled with sharp stakes. Following behind them are 500 archers holding strong bows, and after them came the troops holding long halberds, spears, etc. The formation looked majestic and sends a chill down their spines.

Hui Hu and a few men who looked like leaders were sitting atop their horses, making pointing actions towards them, obviously discussing their plans of attack.

Wu Zhuo pointed to a burly man, who looks like a wolf, next to Hui Hu and said, "That man is called 'Wolfman' Li Ao, a famous horse thief who frequents the border along the State of Han. His fame is on par with Hui Hu, and I did not expect that he also belongs to the King of Wei."

Xiang Shaolong commented, "So it seems that this 10,000 strong troop is made up of different groups of horse thieves, but they're all men sent by the King of Wei. Humph! I think I understand now, the King of Wei is dealing with us so as to give Prince Xinling a hard blow, but also because there's a personal grudge involved. Because I once killed a large group of Hui Hu's men."

He suddenly realized, no wonder at that time Dou Liang would secretly leak news to Hui Hu, and ask Hui Hu to come and steal the horses and women. It's because they are all spies sent by the King of Wei to stir up trouble at the Zhao border.

Cheng Xu said, "It seems that they will take turns and attack us relentlessly day and night. This will be a long battle which

will see who weakens first.”

Zha Yuanyu heaved a cold sigh and said, “Even if reinforcements were to come immediately upon hearing the news, it’ll still take at least 15 days. I’m afraid we can’t even hold them off for three days, who would have expect them to be so strong?”

The sounds of drums were heard.

A string of men carrying shields came out from the tiny gaps between the rows of wooden stakes and lined up neatly in front, followed by the soldiers with tools and the archers.

Xiang Shaolong saw that the sky is getting dark and after asking Cheng Xu for the bag of fire arrows that has been wrapped in oiled cloth, instructed them, “All of you will be in charge of defenses here. I’ll go behind enemy lines to burn their rations and chase their horses away, let’s see what great they can still do after that?”

Everyone looked at him in shock, not comprehending how he is going to make his way to the enemy camp.

CHAPTER 6
Defeating The Enemy's Army
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG returned to camp and changed into his black outfit, strapped on the belt containing his needles and the equipment used for mountain climbing, carried the bows and arrows on his back and after kissing Lady Ya and bidding his farewell to the maids, he left towards the back of the camp.

He passed by Zhao Qian's tent and he can't help but stand outside the entrance of the tent and called out, "Princess!"

The tempo of the drums became more and more frantic,

which means that the enemy is going to launch an attack soon.

“Boom, boom, boom...”

Beat by beat, it sounds like the calls of the grim reaper, the sounds going straight into the deepest corner of the souls of everyone on the battlefield.

Zhao Qian could have been thinking about Xiang Shaolong at that time, and upon hearing his voice, she lifted the flap of her tent in surprise and cried out, “Shaolong! What are you doing here? Hey!”

Her pretty eyes noticed his black outfit.

Xiang Shaolong looked that this young girl as pretty as Wu Tingfang, looking at her pure, innocent and refreshing face and the feelings that he has been trying to keep suppressed rushed up and he said with a smile, “I am now going on a deadly mission to deal with the enemy, isn’t Princess going to give me some encouragement?”

Zhao Qian was startled and her pretty eyes revealed her fear and excitement. She lifted her pretty face gently, pouted her lips and quietly waited for the arrival of her first kiss and happiness without any apprehension at all but her dainty and pert bosom was heaving quickly.

Next to the camp there were suddenly war cries.

The enemy has started to make their way up the slope.

But nothing entered the ears of Xiang Shaolong and Zhao

Qian. They were totally lost in that feeling of closeness, drunk in the soul wrenching proximity.

The sounds of battle cries and arrows flying broke the silent night and fell and rose like waves.

Xiang Shaolong released Zhao Qian and said with a smile, "With this kiss! I, Xiang Shaolong, will have the confidence to protect Princess until the end of time."

While Zhao Qian was still feeling intoxicated, Xiang Shaolong has already disappeared into the darkness of the night.

The northern wind blew.

Xiang Shaolong used all the skills he's learnt and based purely on his memory and feel, climbed up the steep cliff using the rope he had tied earlier. He quietly landed himself behind the enemy and made his way silently towards the enemy camp.

He once received the strictest military training of the 21st century and such night sabotages is but child's play to him.

Without his armor to weigh him down, he was like a bird that found wings. He moved silently and speedily like a civet cat and was soon at the back of the enemy.

The thieves set up their camp according to the 'square formation', with five squares from the inside to the outside.

The tents containing the rations were at the furthest back, followed by two large enclosures where hundreds of warhorses were kept.

The situation over at the other side was getting more and more intense but the situation at the enemy's camp here is peaceful, quiet and dimly lit. It seems that for the thieves whose turn is not up for their attack is trying to gather as much rest as possible.

Xiang Shaolong laughed secretly to himself, and thought that he can guarantee that they will not have a good night's sleep tonight, but they will have a cruel nightmare which has come to life.

He observed closely and found that the security at the enemy camp was lax, and some of the soldiers on guard duty were even sitting on the ground and nodding off.

When he went to the horse enclosure, he felt it even more hilarious. It turns out that the 12 men on night duty were gambling happily in a circle, as if they're totally unaware of the intense situation over at the battlefield.

As soon as he gets rid of these 12 thieves, he'll be able to set fire to the rations tent.

The problem is how can he kill these 12 soldiers who are experienced in battle and not let a single one escape?

Xiang Shaolong cracked his head over this.

Right at this time one of the men walked towards him.

Xiang Shaolong was initially shocked, luckily he saw that the man was loosening his pants as he walked and he realized what the other party was going to do so he hurriedly hid behind a tree.

That person just stepped into the woods when there's a flash of dagger, he felt a coldness at his throat and was dead immediately.

Xiang Shaolong kept his Flying Rainbow, removed that person's outer armor and wore it. He swaggered out until he was behind two of the men and reached out to grab their heads and banged it hard against each other. His palms reached out and with lightning speed chopped at another two men's neck.

His moves were smooth and swift and only when the four fell to the ground did the other seven thieves realize what has happened.

The dagger flashed. With the Flying Rainbow in his hand, Xiang Shaolong leapt up and landed on the rock that they had been using as a gambling table and slashed the throats of three men.

"Bang!"

He kicked his leg and it landed on the side of one of the men's face, who had just drawn his sword. The man fainted.

The remaining three thieves were terrified and escaped in two different directions.

Xiang Shaolong secretly laughed to himself and Flying Rainbow flew from his hand, stabbing and killing one of the men in his back.

The other two saw that he has lost his weapon so they drew their swords and came running back.

Xiang Shaolong reached towards his waist and pulled out two flying needles and with a flick of his wrist; the needles flew out like lightning, aiming at the spot between the men's brows.

By the time their bodies touch the ground; Xiang Shaolong has already picked up Flying Rainbow and disappeared into the darkness.

The battle cries were even more intense now.

Sounds of rocks and stones landing were heard, obviously the enemy is near the top of the slope and Cheng Xu and the rest had no choice but to release the rocks to attack the enemy making their way up.

By now Xiang Shaolong has successfully destroyed the horse enclosure at the back and he hurriedly removed his bow and made his way past the horses nearer to where the rations are kept.

Looking at the enemy's camp from this angle, he happened to see that at the outermost area furthest back about three feet away there were a row of 20 odd tents, with a lamp hung outside each of the tent, shaking in the northerly wind. The camp was deserted with only a few guards on night duty who were dozing off, security were extremely lax.

They can't really be blamed, for this place is behind all their troops and they thought that Xiang Shaolong's men were all heavily surrounded far away, that's why they were careless.

This morning Xiang Shaolong had made use of his high vantage view and saw clearly that the 40 odd tents at the last two rows were used to store rations, saving him the trouble of having to scout around.

The camp's back was facing the south. The northern wind is blowing right now. So if he can successfully set fire to the rations at the southern end and if the fire were to follow the direction of the wind, he may very well cause the rest of the camp to be on fire very quickly, especially when the inside of the camp is full of wild grass. It may become a huge fire that no one can deal with.

After he made up his mind, Xiang Shaolong knelt down with one knee on the ground and lit the arrows first before shooting it towards the ration tent nearest to him. He chose the tent right at the back of the camp, so unless the smoke was very thick, the enemy will not find out about the fire so soon.

After setting fire to the tents at the outer area, he set fire to the horse grains inside the horse enclosure. He found one exceptionally strong warhorse with stirrups and led it around the camp through the dense woods at the side, towards the middle of the camp.

By now the northern side of the camp is thick with smoke and flames could be seen and a few alert guards have started crying out to others to put out the fire and were rushing towards the fire.

What made the thieves even more panicky were the nervous

neighs and trampling of the warhorses, and for a moment the whole camp was in chaos.

Xiang Shaolong rode the horse and at the same time continued shooting fire arrows along the perimeter of the camp. As long as the perimeter of the camp is on fire, those in deep sleep inside the tents can forget about escaping the fire.

While everyone's attention was focused on the intense fire at the northern end, he wore the thief's armor again and walked boldly across the camp towards the perimeter on the other side.

The thieves' camp is in a mess. The troops were trying to get as much rest as possible before they start the next shift of attack but they are now scurrying out of the tents sleepy-eyed and still in a daze about their surroundings.

Some even thought enemies have attacked them and came running out with their weapons and armor in disarray.

Everywhere else there were scurrying and panicky soldiers.

Sounds of hooves were heard from the northern end. Obviously the warhorses are in shock and running towards the plains.

Xiang Shaolong rode past but no one suspected him at all. Some even called out to him as he's the only person to have a horse to run after the escaped horses.

Xiang Shaolong called out a reply and turned a circle, still running towards the perimeter on the other side. By now

the tents at the side along the back were embroiled in the fire and the fire engulfed the surrounding trees and grass, adding fuel to the rapidly spreading fire.

He had used up his arrows so he might as well throw away his bow and pulled out his Flying Rainbow instead. He toppled every lantern that he saw and when the oil lamps dropped to the ground, the flames started immediately and it's even more effective than the arrows.

He heard something behind him. Xiang Shaolong immediately lied low on the horse's back and three arrows flew past his back.

He laughed and with a tight grip around the horse's belly, is already far away from them. After toppling another 10 odd lanterns, he realized that the soldiers are not coming towards him. Without hesitation, he hurried the horse to run faster towards his own camp.

By now the soldiers who were attacking the camp came running back in frenzy, thinking that a large group of enemies have attacked them in their panic.

These thieves, besides Hui Hu, Wolfman and another four leaders, the rest were all foot soldiers so by the time they retreated, Hui Hu and those on horses were already way ahead.

Xiang Shaolong was brilliant and bold. He kept his Flying Rainbow and pulled out two flying needles instead and hid it in his hands.

In the darkness, Hui Hu could only rely on the far away fire and could not see clearly so he thought that the person coming towards them is his own man here to give a report so he shouted from afar, "What happened?"

Xiang Shaolong shouted back, "It's Prince Xinling's men!"

The rest of the bandit leaders were shocked and hastened over.

Hui Hu and Wolfman were a little further behind and Xiang Shaolong secretly lamented that it's a pity. He raised his hands and the flying needles shot out.

The strength of his wrist was formidable and the impact of the long and thin needles astonishing, going past the armor and the two bandit leaders right at the front were struck immediately.

Before the two thieves fell, Xiang Shaolong had pulled out another two needles and threw them at another two people behind them.

Hui Hu and Wolfman both realized that something was not right and as they cried out, they pulled their long swords and came towards him from two sides.

By now the two men in the front row had already fell with a groan from the side of their horses.

Xiang Shaolong had no intention of retrieving the flying needles and with one hand controlling the horse and the other hand pulling out Flying Rainbow, he faced Wolfman who was coming from his left side.

Wolfman roared and borrowing the force from the running horse, aimed his sword towards his face.

Xiang Shaolong cried out and raised his sword to block and at the same time leaned to a side and raised his leg and kicked Wolfman in his waist.

This kick is modified from Thai kickboxing and extremely powerful. Wolfman screamed and fell off his horse.

By now the two men at the back row who were struck by the flying needles dropped to the ground with a dull thud.

The warhorses, having lost their riders, were stamping and jumping in shock. When the hoof of one of the horses stamped down, it happened to land right on the chest of Wolfman who had fallen to the ground. Sounds of bones cracking could be heard immediately and this ferocious man died immediately.

Xiang Shaolong turned a circle around the two horses and took the opportunity to take out another flying needle and rushed towards Hui Hu's back.

Hui Hu saw that the situation was not right and turned his horse around, running swiftly towards the rapidly burning camp.

Xiang Shaolong removed his armor to lighten his body weight and gave chase.

His horse is carrying a much lighter load compared to Hui Hu's horse, and it's also especially strong so it was only about seven or eight horse lengths behind Hui Hu in the

blink of an eye.

Without a word, Xiang Shaolong threw his flying needle.

Who would have expected that Hui Hu saw that there's no way he can run away so he might as well turned his horse around and coincidentally managed to avoid the flying needle.

That place happens to be right between the camp and the retreating soldiers so there was no one around for the moment, and it became a one to one situation.

Hui Hu raised his sword and came rushing back, shouting, "Who is that?"

Xiang Shaolong laughed loudly, "It's your old friend Xiang Shaolong."

Amidst the sound of metal clanking, the two of them went past each other on horseback and exchanged three sword strokes but no one gained the upperhand.

Xiang Shaolong did not expect him to have such excellent arm strength and swordsmanship. When he turned his horse around, he used his thighs to control the horse while his right hand held Flying Rainbow and his left hand drew out a flying needle.

He has been spending most of his time on horseback recently and this made his horsemanship improve greatly so he's no longer the greenhorn he used to be.

Hui Hu took the opportunity to draw his bow and arrow and

cocked the arrow with lightning fast speed. With a 'clang' he released a strong arrow, his long sword held across by his teeth.

Xiang Shaolong's training has always been avoiding bullets so he's not afraid of his arrow at all. He leaned to the side and avoided the arrow and his thigh tightened against the horse's belly and it surged forward.

Hui Hu did not expect him to avoid this fatal strike and in shock he threw the bow at him while taking his long sword, which was clasped in his mouth.

Xiang Shaolong raised his feet and kicked the flying bow away. Flying Rainbow swept past, towards Hui Hu's chest.

There was a loud 'clang'.

Although Hui Hu managed to narrowly block the sword, but his defense was raised chaotically while his opponent's attack is planned. On top of that, he used the momentum from the running horse to increase the power of the strike so Hui Hu collapsed onto his horse's back.

Xiang Shaolong roared and with a backhand let loose the flying needle.

There was a 'clink', and although the flying needle struck Hui Hu, it landed on his hard helmet and ricocheted off.

Xiang Shaolong knows that the situation is dire, if he allows the two horses to run in the wrong direction like this, there'll be no way he can catch up with this fiend within the short distance to the camp so he dismounted his horse with a back

flip, turned a somersault in the air and Flying Rainbow flew out of his hand.

By now Hui Hu had just managed to seat himself upright, his thighs clasp his horse's belly when Xiang Shaolong's extremely sharp Flying Rainbow, which was made by the finest craftsman in the State of Yue, pierced him in his back and he died on the spot.

The horse ran wildly and after a distance away, Hui Hu's body fell from the horse.

Xiang Shaolong landed on the ground safely and ran up to retrieve his Flying Rainbow.

Thunderous war cries were heard from his side of the camp, apparently Cheng Xu and the rest saw how chaotic the thieves were and took the opportunity to kill their way out.

Xiang Shaolong felt his valor rising and he cut off Hui Hu's head, ignoring the flowing fresh blood and with the head held aloft, leapt up the horse towards the 2000 horse thieves who were retreating and shouted, "Hui Hu is dead! Hui Hu is dead! Run away quickly! Escape!"

Those thieves who were running back carrying torches were already in a panic because they were being pursued, and now on seeing this person in front of them carrying Hui Hu's head, thought that a strong army has come. No one dared to fight on and with a shout; all of them ran away in all directions.

The defeat of the thieves was like a domino effect, the

thieves running at the back has no idea what has happened but the chain reaction made them run for their lives as well.

2000 odd men, defeated without even a fight.

In a short while, Xiang Shaolong met up with Cheng Xu and his troops who were pursuing the thieves and the whole army cheered and killed their way towards the blazing enemy camp.

The thieves have lost their leader, their camp is on fire, their rations and horses lost and none of them is in the mood for battle and were all running away. Xiang Shaolong led his men and killed until the day broke, coming out totally victorious.

They have killed more than a thousand enemies, but on Xiang Shaolong's side only five men perished and 150 odd men injured. Fighting against the enemy's 10,000 odd troops with less than a thousand men and yet they suffered so little losses, it's really an unbelievable miracle. This has also established Xiang Shaolong's position in the battlefield.

But it was really a close shave towards victory.

When the enemy's camp was on fire, Hui Hu's men has already cleared all the obstacles on the slope and filled the ditches and was about to launch an offensive when urgent matters cropped up on their side and they had to retreat.

Those wooden stakes became an obstacle to the thieves' retreat instead and they were killed by the rocks that were rolled down and the arrows shot. Blood flowed like rivers

and the scene looked like hell on earth.

Hui Hu and Wolfman's heads were soaked in herbs and alcohol and light cavalry were tasked to send these back to the King of Zhao through shortcuts so that he can show these off to their fellow countrymen.

This is a psychological attack against Zhao Mu on Xiang Shaolong's part, to make the King of Zhao feel how important he really is. If not for the fact that there's now another twist in Zhao Qian's affair, there might have been a chance for him to retain his loyalty.

When Xiang Shaolong returned to camp, only Prince Shaoyuan whose hatred for him has now increased refused to come out, using his illness as an excuse. Even Lady Pingyuan came out to welcome his heroic return, and of course Zhao Ya, Zhao Qian and the other ladies as well.

Ever since ancient times, beauties have always loved heroes and when all the ladies looked at him, their gaze was filled with intoxication, making him feel as if he's in heaven.

In the 21st century, such a situation is almost impossible because everything depends on teamwork and collaboration, and an individual is only a small fry in the whole organization.

But in this warring states period, it is filled with romanticized individualistic heroism, that's why there are people like Shang Yang who can change the whole situation, and a famous general like Lian Po who rules the battlefield.

Xiang Shaolong is a product that has crossed time, with the training and knowledge of modern military tactics, that's why he can emerge miraculously victorious so many times.

So how can the ladies not fall for him?

Even the evil hearted Lady Pingyuan is now looking at him differently, and is now thinking of other things. Such a talent, if sacrificed will be such a waste.

Xiang Shaolong was injured in a few places and Zhao Ya and Zhao Qian dragged him into the commander's tent to tend to his injuries.

Lady Ya saw that Zhao Qian was not at all concerned that Xiang Shaolong was only wearing his shorts and was feeling perplexed. She was afraid that if there's something going on between the two of them, then there might be big trouble.

Zhao Qian asked with concern, "Is it painful?"

With two pretty ladies putting their dainty hands on him, he was so comfortable he almost moaned. Xiang Shaolong replied with a smile and lied down and fell into a deep sleep with the fragrances of the two ladies.

CHAPTER 7
Three States Joined As One
[Translated by JEAN]

AFTER winning Hu Hui, Xiang Shaolong still remained there for the next 10 days.

During this time the injured were recovering very well and after a discussion, everyone agreed that they should no longer wait for the border guard reinforcements for fear that the Weis will have some tricks up their sleeves again. They will continue the journey on their own and hopefully be able to meet the reinforcements on the way.

With this decision made, Xiang Shaolong went to see Lady

Pingyuan.

Her family warriors' attitude towards him has changed greatly, being extremely respectful as if he is a deity.

Xiang Shaolong had found out from Lady Ya long ago that ever since Prince Pingyuan passed away, the 3000 odd family warriors he left behind all did not think highly of Prince Shaoyuan so many of them left and now there's less than 500 of them left.

If not for their connection with Prince Xinling, the King of Zhao would not have tolerated Prince Shaoyuan and allowed him to become such a bully in Handan.

Most of these family warriors are from Zhao and has no feelings towards the State of Wei. Now that they are slowly realizing that after Lady Pingyuan goes to Wei, she may never return to Zhao again, they are beginning to have second thoughts. And Xiang Shaolong has become the most ideal person for them to throw their lot with, firstly because of his background as the grandson-in-law of the Wu family, and most importantly they saw how righteous he is and his astounding swordsmanship, bravery and tactics.

In this era, a powerful man will naturally have men willing to follow him. And Xiang Shaolong's potential to become powerful is like the rising sun.

Mercenaries and family warriors represent a person's ability.

In the past Prince Xinling was able to snatch Jin Bi's military token to deal with the Qins because he already has a few

thousand family warriors under him.

So it's a most natural thing that those in the Pingyuan's family changed their attitude towards him totally.

Outside Lady Pingyuan's tent, he bumped into the almost recovered Prince Shaoyuan but the latter did not even bother to take a look at him and went in on his own.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly commenting to himself, 'what a lad, consider yourself lucky that I did not give you trouble, and yet you have the audacity to show me your unhappiness.'

Ever since he injured Prince Shaoyuan so seriously, his hatred towards him has lessened greatly but now on seeing his antagonistic attitude, the feeling of old hatred came back.

Inside the tent, Lady Pingyuan was leaning on her couch, her wrist resting on the soft cushion, looking especially alluring, which made Xiang Shaolong's heart beat faster.

When she gave birth to Prince Shaoyuan, Zhao De, she was not any older than 15, so although she now has a grown up son, she's only in her 30s. This is the time a woman is most feminine, sultry and in need of the opposite sex.

Having a relationship with such a mature lady is certainly only to pursue the gratification of the body, unlike the illusions surrounding young couples which are quickly broken by reality.

That's why when he saw how inviting Lady Pingyuan looks;

thoughts of copulation immediately entered his head.

But instead he behaved properly and sat down at the side of her feet.

Lady Pingyuan asked nonchalantly, "Xiang Shaolong, you're not going to wait for reinforcements and planning to set off immediately?"

Xiang Shaolong was surprised, "You guessed!"

Lady Pingyuan rolled her eyes at him coquettishly and said, "Not a guess, but a deduction based on your character. Because you're not the kind who will let others have the chance to move first."

Xiang Shaolong was a little thrown off guard and said with a bitter smile, "It seems that Lady has changed your attitude towards me, not only are you not on your guard against me, but you seem to be luring me!"

Lady Pingyuan guffawed and rolled her eyes at him again, "It's your thinking! But I am not going to lure you instead I wish to have an honest talk with you. That's why the change in attitude is a very natural thing."

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be surprised, "That means that Lady has not been totally honest with me all this time."

Lady Pingyuan replied frankly, "You can say that, because at that time I could not see through you. It was only until you defeated Hui Hu's enormous army that I realized that you are not one who will willingly let others control you, and you have the intelligence and ability to achieve this."

Xiang Shaolong smiled bitterly, "You're confusing me. How can I know when you're telling me the truth and when you're lying? Or maybe you only changed your tactic of dealing with me?"

Lady Pingyuan did not reply him but instead asked suddenly, "Do you know why Anli wants to destroy this wedding agreement between Zhao and Wei?"

Xiang Shaolong shook his head.

Lady Pingyuan's eyes was filled with sadness as she slowly explained, "The story will have to start from 20 years ago, which was three years before the battle of Chang Ping started. Zhao Qian was only three years old then."

By now Xiang Shaolong is quite familiar with the history of that time and asked, "Is Lady referring to the time the King of Qin sent the 'king of killing' Bai Qi to attack the state of Han."

Lady Pingyuan chuckled, "King of killing? Humph! This nickname is indeed very suitable for that fiend whose hands are stained with blood."

She sighed and continued, "If the Qins were to invade east, those who will take the brunt first will be our three states, Wei, Zhao and Han. Facing the same calamity, feelings run especially strongly so the three most powerful officials in the three states secretly came to a deal, which is to let the three separated states join together and become a strong country while they are still living, which is akin to the Large State in the past. Only this way can they defeat the Qins and become

the rulers of the world.”

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, “So they actually had this thought.”

Lady Pingyuan changed the topic, “Do you know why I wanted to marry Prince Pingyuan?”

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that of course it’s because she thought that Prince Pingyuan could take over the leadership position! However, he said instead, “Is that another political agreement?”

Lady Pingyuan said, “I guess you can put it that way! It is indeed part of an agreement, which is to make use of the marriages between royalty to strengthen the relations between the various Kings.”

She continued with a smile, “But the most important reason, is because Wuji and me were very interested in the state of Zhao. Before the battle of Changping, the Zhaos had the world’s best generals and fighters and were unrivalled. The state of Zhao was the first to abandon fighting battles with carriages and instead changed to using cavalry as their main force.”

Wuji is Prince Xinling’s name.

During the Spring-Autumn period, carriages were the main forces used in battles. The war carriage represents a person’s status and ability. Changing the carriages to horses is in fact a revolution of that time, which also changed how battles were fought.

Because the State of Zhao had been in constant battles with the ferocious Xiong Nu³ and with their experienced gain from such battles, the Zhaos learnt that this nomadic army who fight mainly on horseback with archery is a lot more nimble and swift in their attacks. Therefore they abandoned fighting with carriages, a way of battle which looks majestic but is in fact useless.

Lady Pingyuan said sadly, “But after Chang Ping, our dreams were rudely shattered, but it also made us believe even more strongly that the only way to survive is to reunite the three states. This is the only way to avoid fighting and wars amongst ourselves.”

Xiang Shaolong said, “Those three important officials, naturally it’s Prince Xinling from Wei, Prince Pingyuan from Zhao, but who is the official in Han?”

Lady Pingyuan replied, “I have no wish to say it. In any way they used their influence and decided on a string of marriage agreements between the three states. The Empress of Zhao is a Han, and Prince Xinling married a Zhao lady. The marriage of Zhao Qian to the Crown Prince of Wei is the most important one in the agreements.”

Xiang Shaolong finally understood and he slapped his thigh as he said, “It must be that King Anli heard about this and was afraid the unification of the three states will make him lose his throne. That’s why he’s going all out to destroy this

³ The Xiongnu were a confederation of nomadic tribes from Central Asia with a ruling class of unknown origin.

marriage agreement. But he is the King of Wei, if he wants to go back on the marriage agreement, he only has to say so, why waste so much effort?"

He looked at her coldly and asked, "Why does Lady want to destroy Zhao Qian's virginity?"

Lady Pingyuan's pretty face blushed slightly and she asked, "Can you not try to settle old scores with me!"

She continued with a sad sigh, "But the situation changed, the early death of Prince Pingyuan has caused the shift of power in Zhao into that fiend Zhao Mu's hand. That's why Prince Xinling was forced to return to Wei and start a new round of fight with that useless King Anli, and Zhao Qian's marriage agreement has lost its initial meaning."

She was deep in thought for a moment, her eyes fixed on Xiang Shaolong before she continued, "In actual fact no one is trustworthy nowadays, but on the surface everyone pretends to be honest in the ways they deal with the world. That useless King Anli has gone back on his words on many occasions, both to people in his own state and outside of it, so how can he go back on his word with the Zhaos. Besides he's very wary of Wuji, so he will not dare to oppose the agreement so publicly."

She paused and said quietly, "Dealing with Zhao Qian is only a secondary matter, the real person he wants to get rid of is me. Because he knows that when Wuji and I join forces, we'll be a huge threat towards him, because I have what Wuji lacks, which is viciousness."

No one understands more than Xiang Shaolong what her last sentence means. Looking at her bright and lengthy eyes, he said quietly, "Why is it that Lady is suddenly being so honest with me, telling me such a great secret?"

Lady Pingyuan's smooth thighs moved slightly, touching the side of Xiang Shaolong's buttocks, her pretty face blushing and she said gently, "Because I saw a new ray of hope in you. Unless you do not step foot into Zhao forever, or else you will certainly have to engage in a life and death duel with Zhao Mu. If you can eliminate Zhao Mu, or take over his position, then it will again be possible for the three states to unite."

She lowered her voice and added, "But this is not the most important reason, do you want to go on listening?"

Xiang Shaolong felt a headache coming on. He does not know if this is another of her ploy to deal with him. Because after eavesdropping on her conversation with her son the other night, her venomous nature has carved a very deep impression on him. Besides, she dotes on her son so much, so how can she really fall for her son's enemy and tells him what's really on her mind?

He thought to himself that if she wants to play games with him, he'll play along with her. He extended his hand and put it on her thigh, gently caressing her sensitive inner thigh, looked in her eyes and explained, "Of course I want to listen!"

Lady Pingyuan's eyes revealed an alluring gaze as she

lowered her head to look at his invasive hand, saying gently, "Because I want to surrender to you, and beg for your love and pity."

Xiang Shaolong shifted forward and sealed her fragrant lips, his hands attacking her at the same time. Lady Pingyuan's body was shaking violently, her tongue cold as ice due to her passion and nervousness. Such unhidden natural reaction served to fuel Xiang Shaolong's lust.

A cold snort was heard from outside the tent.

The two of them were so shocked they separated and looked towards the entrance of the tent.

Prince Shaoyuan lifted the flap and entered. A flash of hatred and anger went across his eyes.

They both guessed that Prince Shaoyuan had actually entered earlier and saw them in their heated embrace but he stepped out again and snorted to surprise them before pretending that nothing has happened and stepped into the tent again.

Joy at having taken revenge surged in Xiang Shaolong's heart and without waiting for Prince Shaoyuan to speak, he rose and said, "We'll be traveling in the night tonight, so will Lady please make preparations."

Without even looking at Prince Shaoyuan, he left.

Xiang Shaolong finally understood some things that seemed so foggy long ago, for example the reason Tian Dan sent Xiao Weimou to destroy the wedding agreement between Zhao

and Wei is because he does not want the three states to unite. Not only will that be disadvantageous for Qin, it will also become a threat to the state of Qi and the other states.

Although the three states all had different family names, but they had once served the same master so naturally they are a lot closer to one another compared to other states.

In the past Prince Xinling risked himself to steal the military token and wrestle over the military power because he wants to preserve the state of Zhao, with the hope that one day the three states can unite into one and become the strongest state.

But Tao Fang once said that the Weis are most untrustworthy. Lady Pingyuan may have some true feelings for him, but for Prince Xinling, he's just a useful pawn.

And the thing that influenced his decision the most is that he knows that the three states will never unify. This has already been written in history books.

Can he change history?

"Commander!"

Xiang Shaolong turned towards the direction of the voice, it turns out to be one of two Zhao Qian's personal maid, Cui Tong.

These two maids were extremely pretty and outstanding, about one or two years older than Zhao Qian, which makes them about 17 or 18 years old.

Cui Tong stopped him and with a lowered head, said "Third Princess would like to request the audience of Sir."

Xiang Shaolong's lust which was stirred up by Lady Pingyuan was not appeased, and on seeing how alluring and shy she looked, he felt a strong desire. But he thought that if he allows himself to do that, it will only serve to make Zhao Qian look down on him so he suppressed his urge and followed her to Zhao Qian's tent.

Cui Tong dared not walk alongside him, and walked half a step behind him instead.

Xiang Shaolong turned his head around and threw a glance at her. When he saw her blushing, he asked quizzically, "Why is Sister Xiaotong so shy?"

Cui Tong was showered and kept her head so low that her forehead was almost touching her chest and dared not look at him.

By now the two of them have passed the guards and entered the compound and there's no one else around the ladies camps. Xiang Shaolong is after all a flirt and he grabbed her hand and asked gently, "Is there anyone in your tent?"

Cui Tong's petite body trembled as she exclaimed in a mixture of shock and joy, "Commander! Please, others will find out."

The flap of the tent where Xiao Zhao and the rest stayed in flipped open, startling Xiang Shaolong and he hurriedly released his hold on Cui Tong's hand and hurriedly walked

into Zhao Qian's tent.

For the past 10 days, Xiang Shaolong and Zhao Qian had been behaving intimately. Other than the last hurdle, they have tried every other physical thing possible and also suffering from trying to hold themselves back. That's why for these two days, they are restricting themselves instead and dare not overstep the border, afraid that they will do something that they might regret and let others catch him deflowering the beautiful Third Princess.

Zhao Qian saw him arriving and happily gave him a long pouch which she sewed personally and said, "I made this especially for your wooden sword. Qian'er has never liked swords or weapons, but Xiang Lang's wooden sword is an exception."

And she stared with irritation at Flying Rainbow, which was hung at his waist.

Xiang Shaolong like to carry Flying Rainbow with him because it's light and swift and on seeing the beauty's gift, he hugged her slender waist and kissed her tender cheeks before saying with a laugh, "You don't even like the famous sword from Yue?"

Zhao Qian glared at him and said, "The Yue sword is well made and pretty, but it's still a gift from Zhao Mu, and seeing it reminds me of him. Therefore I have no wish to see it."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed in surprise, "So you don't like Zhao Mu."

Zhao Qian's eyes reddened as she replied, "Not only do I hate him, but I hate Imperial Father even more."

Xiang Shaolong hugged her and moved to a side and sat down with her. Lying on the soft cushion, his hands roaming about her bosom, he asked, "Did Zhao Mu try to do anything overboard with you?"

Zhao Qian was weak from his fondles and burrowed herself into his chest, saying sadly, "I have a marriage agreement with the Weis, so he dare not be so bold. However Qian'er's mother died because of him."

Xiang Shaolong was so shocked that he stopped his hand activity and asked hoarsely, "What?"

Hot tears rushed out as Zhao Qian hugged Xiang Shaolong tightly, "Xiang Lang must decide for Qian'er, and kill that fiend for me."

Xiang Shaolong wiped away her tears and asked gently, "Tell me first how he caused your mother's death."

He has never asked Zhao Qian about matters involving the imperial court, and thought that the Zhao empress now is her birth mother.

Zhao Qian related sadly with tears in her eyes, "At that time Qian'er's mother was still Imperial Father's most beloved concubine. One night Zhao Mu and Imperial Father summoned Mother into the bedroom and the next day Mother hanged herself. Qian'er was only 10 years old, but I will never forget that scene. Mother died horribly!"

And she cried bitterly again.

Xiang Shaolong did not imagine that such a flawless and pretty princess would have such a horrible childhood and allowed her to cry and vent her anger. Caressing her back, he felt a wave of inextinguishable anger welling up.

Zhao Mu and King Xiao Cheng are really worst than beasts, to actually engage in such sadistic sexual play in the palace. From this he can deduce that there are many more victims in the palace.”

The imperial palace is a place filled with the filthiest and unreasonable people.

The only way to change such immoralities is for himself to unite the world and install new values.

He remembered the words of Yuan Zong, the last great man of Mohism.

When he was discussing the philosophy of this era with Yuan Zong, Xiang Shaolong mentioned Confucius and Yuan Zong said dismissively, “He just refused to face reality, thinking of the past and present all the time and only knows how to protect tradition. He’s is not worthy to have such a high and respected position. He advocates so-called rituals, which only serves to make the various heads of states spends even more excessively and the country’s wealth will be in the selfish hands of a small group. He only theorizes but is not aware of the actual situations, and totally ignorant about hardship of wars. The most irritating thing is that he belittles those who works with their hands, and makes fun of his

disciple Fan Chi who is a farmer as ‘a small man’.”

Naturally Xiang Shaolong is not intellectual enough to have a debate with him, but he does know that the two schools of thought, Mohism and Confucianism, are like the north and south poles, both opposite extremes.

Not only is Mozi a famed warrior, he’s also a craftsman, something that Confucius looks down on. He worked with his hands and feet and regard rituals as a false pretense and a waste of resources. The biggest difference is, the teachings of Confucius are to the benefit of the traditional monarch while Mozi goes after a new outlook in society.

No monarch will like Mozi’s ideals.

This is also the main reason why Confucius was almost regarded as a deity later.

It was also from Yuan Zong that Xiang Shaolong realized that the term ‘ru’ is not a term used only by the disciples of Confucius during that era.

A ‘ru’ was initially the scholar who maintains the clan’s parents, ancestors, family history etc but after the family clan fell into hard times, they stayed around the commoners and using their knowledge of poetry, books, rituals, helped others with the rites for funerals etc, or teach others what they learnt in order to earn some money for living expenses.

It’s only when Confucius expounded on the philosophy of ‘Education of a Scholar’ (Jun Zi Ru), did the term ‘ru’ became a term specifically used for Confucianism.

Each school of thought represents their ideals towards governance.

To Xiang Shaolong, Mozi's teachings are more suited to his taste. But of course he won't just accept everything in the teachings.

Zhao Qian's sobbing stopped and on seeing him so quiet, she can't help but call out, "Xiang Lang!"

Xiang Shaolong lifted her face up and kissed her a few times before saying. "Don't be afraid! I'll be there to protect you in future."

Zhao Qian said sadly, "I don't wish to return to Zhao."

Xiang Shaolong was stunned and asked, "You want to stay in Wei?"

Zhao Qian exclaimed, "Of course not, but as long as I can stay by your side, I am not afraid of any hardship."

She continued with a cry, "If I return to the Zhao palace, and there's no marriage agreement, Zhao Mu will certainly not let me off. Then death will be the only way for Qian'er to repay Xiang Lang."

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows and asked, "Can he really be so lawless? Isn't Lady Ni able to escape from his evil clutches and remain unscathed?"

Zhao Qian exclaimed. "Lady Ni is different! Her father-in-law is the famous Zhao general Zhao She and most of the leaders and generals in the army were taught by him. Therefore no

matter how much Zhao Mu covets her, he dare not force himself on her. But my status is entirely dependant on my Imperial Father, if he doesn't protect me, there's no one who can save me."

Xiang Shaolong consoled her, "There's me!"

Only now he realized that Zhao Ni had married Zhao Kuo's brother. No wonder Zhao Ni and Lady Ya are so close.

Zhao Qian sighed, "Zhao Mu knows how to use drugs very well, if he's really intent on having me, there's no way Qian'er will be able to stop him. I can only copy my Mother!"

She felt a deep sorrow and started crying again. A fire of hatred burned in Xiang Shaolong's heart.

For Zhao Qian, for Shu'er's revenge, when he returns to Zhao, that will be the time he'll have a life and death duel with Zhao Mu! He will use all methods to attack this fiend. It doesn't matter even if he has to use the help of Prince Xinling and Lady Pingyuan.

When he returned to his commander's tent, Cheng Xu and Wu Zhuo were waiting to discuss the route to Fengqiu.

After his conversation with Lady Pingyuan, he was suddenly enlightened and understood what used to baffle him.

If he can return to the 21st century, he'll certainly become the leading expert in the history of the warring states period.

The three states disintegrated and became Han, Zhao and Wei, but the most ironic part is that these three states have

been constantly hoping to reunite again. The only problem is who will become the king!

The most direct way is to attack and conquer.

The first to start was the very magnificent Wei who even managed to invade Handan and stayed there for two years until they were forced to retreat by the state of Qi.

Naturally the state of Qi did not come to the Zhao's rescue because they felt a special liking for them, but because what Qi fears most is the unification of the three states. Because under that situation, the first to be in trouble will be the state of Qi due to its close proximity to the three states.

Later the Weis suffered heavy losses at the battle of Maling and 100,000 brave troops were eliminated in one day. Even the Chief Commander Prince Shen and the great general Pang Juan lost their lives and they never managed to pick themselves up after that fall.

For the Weis, the battle of Maling is akin to the battle of Chang Ping to the Zhao's, with deep reaching influence.

Because the other states were afraid of the unification of the three states, they took the opportunity to keep invading Wei. The continuous attacks by Qi, Qin and Chu made Wei unable to use their military power to unify the three states.

But the threat by the Qins are growing bigger day by day.

Therefore the most influential senior officials in the three states secretly arranged marriage agreements and such, hoping to unify the three states in a more peaceful way.

Naturally they are the only ones who know the details.

But the State of Qi has been keeping their eye on them all the time, that's why Tian Dan sent Xiao Weimou this time to destroy this marriage agreement.

Now Xiang Shaolong is very certain that Xiao Weimou will not let them off.

Xiao Weimou is not like Hui Hu, who was a mix of soldier and thief. He is a professional killer, a little like the special task force he used to be in, specializing in infiltrating enemy camps to investigate, search, destroy or assassinate, and will be a difficult person to deal with.

Therefore they have to meet up with their reinforcements earlier, only then will they be really safe.

CHAPTER 8
Defending Against The Enemy With Fire
[Translated by JEAN]

THE SNOW this year came especially late, the grass is still green on the plains and the lakes still sparkling.

This place lies between the main Yellow River and its tributaries and the two main river splits into hundreds of smaller rivers. The rivers weaved across each other like silver threads, the grass was lush, thick and fragrant and it was a meeting place between the forest grass and dried grass of the plains.

The entourage traveled slowly through this large piece of flat

carpet-like grassland.

This is still a place which has not been developed, and only a handful of nomads stayed there. They each have their own lifestyle, like the pretty Baiyi tribe in Zhao, and goes about their own business, not accepting the control of the government.

This place has lots of cows, horses and deer. Traveling past this area, they will see them galloping in the distance or lazily grazing.

But this prehistoric place is also a place where fierce beasts roam.

The more frightening are the wild wolves' pack, which kept following in front of behind the troops, not afraid of humans at all.

Xiang Shaolong sent out 10 teams comprising of five men each to scout around the area to avoid being ambushed by enemies who might be hiding in the tall grass or the woods.

Three days later, the terrain started to change, with rising and falling hills and wild grass everywhere, greatly slowing their progress.

Xiang Shaolong felt extremely uneasy.

With Xiao Weimou's evil reputation, if his men are all really good as rumored, he will certainly know that they have battled Hui Hu. At the very least he would have captured some 'escaped thieves' and grilled them to find out their whereabouts.

If his deduction is correct, then Xiao Weimou must be following them and waiting for the best time to strike.

But where will they strike?

By noon, the answer appeared finally. It's a huge mountain diagonally in front of them, and the only way past it is a narrow passage about 3li long.

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows deeply on seeing it and was silent for a moment before summoning Cheng Xu, Wu Zhuo and Zha Yuanyu over and said, "If my guess is correct, Xiao Weimou and his men must be waiting for us at that narrow valley."

Cheng Xu nodded his head, "According to our scout's report, if there are people lying in ambush on the top of both side of the cliffs, just throwing rocks at us will be enough for all of us to perish."

Zha Yuanyu said with a miserable look, "This place is dense with grass and trees, if the enemy were to set up a fire upwind, the thick smoke will be enough to suffocate us to death."

Xiang Shaolong laughed, "Thick smoke can only be used to deal with those who are unprepared. Yuanyu, you will immediately organize all the men to remove all the grass and trees on this side of the mountain and slopes and dig a deep ditch at the bottom of the valley to lure the nearby streams into the ditch to surround the camp. We will join the carriages to face the mountain to protect the camp. At the same time prepare a large amount of clear water in the

camp, each camp is to have at least two barrels and everyone is to carry with them cloths or handkerchiefs. When there's thick smoke, soak it in the water and cover the face with it then they need not fear the choking smoke."

Zha Yuanyu was about to get to work when Xiang Shaolong called him back again and said, "Tell everyone to remove their armors or it might affect the tasks!"

Zhao Yuanyu left with that order.

After Xiang Shaolong discussed a little further with Cheng Xu and Wu Zhuo, he was about to look for Zhao Ya and Zhao Qian when Prince Shaoyuan appeared hurriedly towards him with a few family warriors and demanded, "Xiang Shaolong! Why are we stopping at such a dangerous place? How are we going to fend against the enemy if they use fire to attack us?"

Xiang Shaolong replied coldly, "You can cross the narrow valley alone if you like! But I won't be accompanying."

Prince Shaoyuan's eyes were burning and after staying silent for a moment, naturally he dared not take the risk so he changed his tune, "Since we can't enter, then we should retreat to a safer place."

Wu Zhuo can't help but interrupt, "The sun will set in six hours, and the mountain terrain is difficult to maneuver, if we retreat to a place where we get stuck, we might as well..."

Prince Shaoyuan shouted angrily, "Shut up! A servant like

you has no right to interrupt.”

Wu Zhuo’s expression changed and his hand moved to his sword.

Xiang Shaolong put his hand around Wu Zhuo’s shoulder and said with a smile, “Young Master is mistaken, Wu Zhuo is my battle mate and his words are my words.”

Cheng Xu said with a cold smile, “Whoever sounds more reasonable, we will obey that person.”

Prince Shaoyuan was so furious that the color on his face alternated between pale and red, and he left in a huff.

Wu Zhuo said gratefully, “To be able to fight side by side with Young Grand Master-in-law is the happiest thing in my life.”

Xiang Shaolong patted him warmly before letting go of his hold on his shoulder and looking at the narrow valley, said, “If we can survive tonight, I’m confident that I can deal with Xiao Weimou’s soldiers hiding in ambush above the narrow valley.”

Chang Xu replied, “According to my calculation, Xiao Weimou’s men are certainly not as many as ours, or else they would have attacked us head on long ago when we were traveling.”

They talked a little further before Xiang Shaolong went to see Lady Ya.

Xiao Zhao and the rest had just set up camp and on seeing

his arrival, hurriedly paid their respects.

Looking at these pretty young girls, Xiang Shaolong's spirits lifted and after flirting with them for a moment, he went in to see Lady Ya.

Lady Ya received him warmly and after letting him have his way with her for a while, they sat on the rug and she said, "Shaolong! There are some words that Ya'er must say, please don't be offended!"

Xiang Shaolong laughed, "You must be wanting to ask me about my relationship with Zhao Qian. Don't worry! She's still a virgin."

Lady Ya replied, "But you have aroused her desires, how can she be willing to marry to Wei, and if so why do we still need to go to Daliang?"

Xiang Shaolong replied nonchalantly, "Naturally it's to steal 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual'!"

Lady Ya exclaimed seriously, "Shaolong!"

Xiang Shaolong stopped smiling and said, "I know you want to say, 'if Prince Xinling knows that we are going there to steal the manual, he definitely won't allow us to succeed', right?"

Lady Ya bit his shoulder in anger, so upset that she could not say a word.

Xiang Shaolong caressed her shoulder and consoled her, "Trust your husband! In this era where everyone is trying to

trick everyone else, we can only act according to circumstances. For all you know we can have our cake and eat it too. Hei! It seems like a long time since I was intimate with you."

Lady Ya replied coquettishly, "It's 'not been intimate in camp', we don't have a 'room' here."

Before Xiang Shaolong has a chance to reply, Xiaozi's voice was heard calling from the outside, "Vice-Commander Cheng invites Master Xiang to come out immediately!"

Xiang Shaolong sighed and told Lady Ya, "It must be that fellow Prince Shaoyuan who has gotten into trouble again."

As expected, Prince Shaoyuan has summoned his family warriors and was determined to have his own way and retreat from this mountain on his own.

By the time Xiang Shaolong arrived, Lady Pingyuan was trying to persuade her beloved son to abolish the idea.

When Prince Shaoyuan saw Xiang Shaolong, he got even more furious and exclaimed irritably, "I am not going to sit and die with others. There are forests all around this place. We're in the open while the enemy is in hiding. How long can we defend ourselves? Only a fool who knows nothing about military matters will do such a stupid thing which is akin to committing suicide."

Lady Pingyuan replied angrily, "What right do you have to criticize others? Can you defeat Hui Hu's huge army? That day when Hui Hu was attacking, besides hiding in your tent,

what outstanding things have you've done."

Prince Shaoyuan did not expect his mother to embarrass him in public and he nodded his head and said, "Fine! Now you're totally siding with an outsider, and turned around to deal with your own son. From today onwards, I don't have a mother like you."

"Pak!"

Lady Pingyuan gave him an angry slap and with her body shaking, exclaimed, "Say that again one more time!"

Prince Shaoyuan cupped the side of his cheek that was slapped, his eyes filled with viciousness and alternated between looking at her and Xiang Shaolong before saying frostily, "Now that you have a lover, why do you still need a son like me!"

He raised his voice and cried out, "Children! Those who still want to stay alive, come with me."

Lady Pingyuan was so furious her face paled and she cried out, "No one is allowed to follow him. I am still in charge of this family, since when is it his turn to talk."

The family warriors all kept quiet, but everyone knows that no one will take the risk with Prince Shaoyuan.

Lady Pingyuan looked at Prince Shaoyuan coldly and said, "If you do not come and kowtow to me and admit your mistake, you can forget about expecting my forgiveness." She humphed and returned to her camp.

Xiang Shaolong did not even bother to take a look at the stoned Prince Shaoyuan, but just gave the orders, "Those who really want to live, get to work immediately."

All the family warriors uttered their reply and ignoring Prince Shaoyuan, went about chopping trees and cutting grass.

The others all dispersed, leaving only Prince Shaoyuan standing all alone there, helpless.

The sun was setting, the earth getting dark, the freezing wind blowing from the northwestern direction.

Xiang Shaolong's army was all on the alert, waiting with their weapons. Only a few lamps were lighted in the camp and the scene was miserable and cold.

Xiang Shaolong, Cheng Xu and Wu Zhuo were sitting on a carriage, which surrounded the camp, looking at the movements around them.

The sound of something hard dropping was heard from the other side of the mountain.

The three of them immediately perked up.

They've finally confirmed the presence of the enemy, confirmed Xiang Shaolong's analysis.

The sound of something falling came because the enemy ran into the horse-tripping ropes they put up.

It must be known that before this moment, whether there really is an enemy out there is still an unknown, with no facts to support that point. They only deduced that if there is an

enemy out there, then they must be hiding in the narrow valley. This place still belongs to the Weis after all, so Xiao Weimou will have to work speedily and attack the camp in the cover of the night.

If they have to attack at night, this kind of place is most advantageous to attack with fire, and to attack with fire they must first position themselves upwind. Therefore their enemy will certainly have to leave the narrow valley and go to another mountain, which faces them at the other side of the camp.

So based on this point, they laid down horse tripping ropes in the wilderness on both sides of the camp. If the enemy were to trip and fall and make some noise, they would be able to know the position of the enemy even in the darkness.

Sounds of things dropping and quiet groans were heard.

Xiang Shaolong laughed loudly and shouted, "Xiao Weimou, you've been tricked! Release the arrows!"

Lamps were lighted in the camp, hundreds of fire arrows were shot high into the air, aiming towards the side and the entrance of the narrow valley, leaving only a clear spot upwind.

The flames burned all around as the dry woods caught fire rapidly, and the wind blew the flames and smoke towards the narrow valley, surrounding the enemies who came under the cover of the night with flames. It turns out that Xiang Shaolong has already ordered his men to splash oil on

the woods so that it will burn once it catches fire.

Thick smoke rose up, most of them blown towards the narrow valley, with only a little smoke floating towards their camp.

Everyone hurriedly dampened their cloths and covered their noses and mouths with it.

Screams and groans were heard, the enemy is helpless and did not expect Xiang Shaolong to strike first and use fire to attack them instead.

Shadows appeared.

The entrance to the valley has been blocked by the huge fire and the enemies who were in hiding around the camp have no choice but to take the risk and attack the camp.

The Zhao soldiers saw that their commander's eccentric plans have worked again and morale was greatly boosted. In unison, they all rushed over and started shooting arrows at the enemies who were making their way up the slope.

Without any cover for protection and hindered by the dark smoke, the enemies fell one by one and only 10 odd enemies managed to past the flooded ditch that surrounded the camp but all of them perished at the slope.

The outcome of the battle is certain.

Xiang Shaolong saw that even in such dire circumstances, their enemies were still fierce and swift and was secretly thanking his good luck. If it's a head on attack, he may be

able to win but he will certainly suffer heavy losses on his side as well. The situation would not be so easy like now. Obviously intellect and bravery must work hand in hand, neither one can be missing.

By now the surrounding forests were all in flames and the fire burned high into the sky, ancient trees falling one by one, swallowed by the fire, increasing the magnificence of the scene.

Thick black smoke traveled into the narrow valley and the fire followed close behind.

The enemy was forced by the fire to launch an attack and some of them have already become inferno men even before then rush out, and they will die even without the arrows shooting them.

What was originally a picturesque wilderness has now become hell on earth.

Screams and cries kept coming out from the scene of the fire, the shouts shattering the sky.

Blood flowed like the river along the slope and ditch.

By dawn, the perimeter up to 10 li away all became charred soil, the fire was still burning far away but has weakened greatly by now.

Xiang Shaolong with his marvelous plan managed to take care of the enemy without losing a single man, and without even knowing what Xiao Weimou looks like. As the saying goes, 'those who are adept in battles will have outstanding

outcomes.'

Corpses lined the area after the fire and according to their calculation; almost a thousand men were burned or shot.

It's just that they do not know if Xiao Weimou is one of the dead.

Xiang Shaolong led a team personally to the narrow valley to make sure that there's no enemy left before letting the others set off immediately, leaving this horrendous place which now looks like hell.

After passing the narrow valley and traveling northeast for about four hours, the group reached the western bank of Pushui.

This part of the river was filled with more rocks than mud, so the water was very clear.

After few li down north, a clear and sparkling huge lake appeared in front of them, with lush plants growing around it and huge eagles, wild ducks and kingfishers flying about. With the blue sky and white clouds as backdrop, it formed a very enchanting scene.

After working hard for one whole night, everyone was in high spirits on reaching this place and immediately set up camp next to the lake and started preparing dinner.

The soldiers were casting nets and catching fishes, and it feels as if they are on a holiday instead.

Lady Ya was suddenly in the mood and ordered someone to

put up curtains at a corner of the lake and started bathing and playing in the clear water. In the end even Zhao Qian, Cui Tong and Cui Lü couldn't withstand the temptation and joined them, their eyes filled with endless joy and fun.

Xiang Shaolong sat lazily on a huge rock next to the lake, admiring the view of the lake and mountains, looking at the endless green grass, with the lake's water clear and green with the reflection of the trees, feeling extremely intoxicated.

The soldiers were enjoying themselves too, stripping themselves naked and jumping into the lake and swimming languidly. After going through so much shocking events, no one can blame them for letting loose now.

As Xiang Shaolong was sharing their joy, Lady Pingyuan's voice rang out gently behind him, "Shaolong, why aren't you swimming as well?"

Xiang Shaolong turned his head around and smiled, "If Lady is willing to frolic with me in the water, your subordinate will gladly oblige."

Lady Pingyuan's pretty face blushed slightly and sat down next to him before sighing sadly, "My opinion of you is getting higher and higher. If you were in charge of the battle of Chang Ping, I can guarantee that the 400,000 who died would not be the Zhaos but the Qins, and the whole situation would have been different."

Xiang Shaolong leaned over, touching her shoulder, smelling her fragrance and said humbly, "Lady you flatter me. It's just

a small victory, nothing to talk about.”

He paused and asked, “How is Prince Shaoyuan?”

Lady Pingyuan’s face turned icy and she said through clenched teeth, “Don’t talk about that useless beast.”

She sighed helplessly, and was silent.

Xiang Shaolong was shocked, “Does he dare not to kowtow to you and apologize?”

Lady Pingyuan turned her head around and looked at him deeply and said, “What’s the use of kowtowing and apologizing? I’ve never been satisfied with my late husband, and now this beast is even worse than him.”

She lowered her head and said with a blush, “Shaolong! Can you give me a child? As long as he is half like you, I’ll be very satisfied.”

Xiang Shaolong was initially startled, and then he was ecstatic and said, “It’s only at this time that I really do not feel any enmity Lady has towards me.”

Lady Pingyuan’s pretty face blushed more crimson as she replied quietly, “You earned this with your capability. After seeing your almost divine tactics again, I no longer wish to be your enemy.”

Xiang Shaolong reached out and held her wrist, asking, “Do you want to become my woman?”

A look of helplessness came over Lady Pinyuan as she sighed quietly, “Now I no longer wish to hide anything from you.

For my return to Wei this time, it's been arranged that I'll remarry a general who has control of the military, this is a fact that cannot change. You... will you blame me?"

Xiang Shaolong was relieved instead. In reality he only has lust and not feelings for this woman, and only harbored the feeling of having fun with her. On one hand he will use this to take revenge against Prince Shaoyuan for causing the death of Su Nu; and it's also a way to stay alive, so how can he blame her. Of course he had to pretend to be sad and extremely disappointed on the surface.

The alarm sound went off.

Xiang Shaolong looked over in shock, and saw on the flat lands in the distance, a troop of horses and men were running towards them.

Lady Pingyuan's hands gripped his tightly and said ecstatically, "The reinforcements from the pass are here."

CHAPTER 9
In A Dangerous Position
[Translated by JEAN]

THE CAPITAL OF WEI, Daliang, is situated on the southern bank of the Yellow River, where the big rivers like Luoshui, Suishui, Weishui, Danshui and Honggou etc converge. The Weis also dug up two man-made canals Dagou and Lianggou to surround and protect Daliang. It became a natural barrier, making this great city easy to defend but difficult to invade, giving them stability.

The State of Wei was situated in the middle of the central plains then, with her north backing Zhao, west siding Qin,

east siding Qi and south facing Chu. It's at the crossroad of the meeting place of the world. Daliang is situated right in the middle of the state of Wei and is an important city in any battle plans since it's in the middle of important roads and waterways.

If one wants to invade the other five states, the task will be made very difficult if he does not defeat Wei first and in order to defeat Wei, Daliang is a place they must gain control of. Therefore one can see how important this capital of Wei is.

Xiang Shaolong and his party rested at Fengqiu for three days and under the protection of 2000 men from the Pass, crossed the Yellow River and after traveling for another 15 days, Daliang is just in the distance.

Throughout the journey, Xiang Shaolong was relaxed, as if he has joined a tour group for ancient China and traveling through 'old places'. In his relaxed frame of mind, he imagined that on this huge and open land, there are countless cities scattered over it, each city with its strong and high city walls and the vast open land beyond the city walls. And each city is the center for battles and for expansion of the military.

Everything important that happened in this era, happened around places like these, spreading with the invasion and defense of cities as centers. Whether a city could be protected or taken, shows the fortune and success of a country. Such battle which centers on attacking cities is the

simplest and most straightforward and if seen from another angle. It also has an indescribable captivation. To a ruler in the warring states period, it's like a game of chess. Once hooked and you're unable to pull yourself away and the only way is to have a battle of wits, to see who will become the ultimate survivor.

In these enclosed city walls, are military centers of different sizes, and are the most important military command center for the surround area and also the symbol of power. Defeating these cities will mean destroying the other party's governmental control.

The troops from the Pass escorted them until they were about 10li north of Dagou before going back to Fengqiu, leaving the task of escorting them to the military situated at the outskirts of Daliang.

By this time the welcoming party sent by Prince Xinling has arrived and escorted them through the hanging bridge past Dagou. And Prince Xinling, Wei Wuji, has already set up a formation on the other end, ready to receive this wedding entourage who has went through so much difficulties.

Wei Wuji, one of the four Princes of the warring states period, was dressed in casual wear, sitting astride a horse. He has a square face and big ears, tall and good-looking with a stern and respectable air about him. Although he was smiling warmly, his eyes were gleam which gives one a sense of awe. He may be Lady Pingyuan's younger brother but he looks older than his sister, maybe because of long-term

stress that aged him faster. After a round of small talk, all of them headed towards Daliang.

The city of Daliang was full of sights and sounds, the city streets wide and spacious forming an inconsistent rectangular shape, following the curves of the rivers with the southern gate as the main gate. All the city gates have a protruding watch tower which greatly improved the defenses. They have to travel another 5li north from the city gate, and the sand was blowing in front of them.

All of them awaited for the King of Wei's orders and the edict states that besides Xiang Shaolong, Zhao Qian and the other ladies, the rest of the group have to set up camp outside the city.

Naturally Lady Pingyuan, her son and their family warriors are not under such restrictions. Xiang Shaolong felt extremely surprised and indignant. And a look of unhappiness appeared on Prince Xinling's face but as it's an imperial order, and unless he has made up his mind to rebel immediately, he can only accept this humiliating arrangement. After Xiang Shaolong gave some instructions to Cheng Xu and Wu Zhuo, he followed Prince Xinling into Daliang.

Compared to Handan, Daliang looks different. It did not have the ancient magnificence of Zhao, but has its own exquisite intricacies. Its decorations were more colorful. The streets in the city were split into eight large streets from north to south and four main streets from east to west crisscrossing

one another. These 12 large streets are wide enough to accommodate more than 10 horses moving side by side, so one can imagine how huge it is. With the imperial soldiers opening the path for them, the entourage passed by the decorated streets outside the palace, went around the high walls of the palace and came to a place at the northeastern corner where the nobility and senior officials reside.

Along the way the streets were full of activities and there were twice as many people on the streets as compared to Handan. When they saw Prince Xinling's flag, they all looked respectful and some even knelt down to pay their respects, which goes to show how esteemed Prince Xinling is in the hearts of the Weis.

Prince Xinling's residence, Wei's Chu is situated right at the end of the street. Behind the high walls, tall trees reached into the sky, which showed off Prince Xinling's extraordinary status.

Xiang Shaolong was separated from Zhao Qian and the rest and was assigned different courtyards to reside in.

Prince Xinling was very warm in his welcome and sent four pretty maids to personally serve him.

After cleaning up, he received Xiang Shaolong immediately in the study. After all the maids retreated, Prince Xinling warmly invited Xiang Shaolong to partake the meal and after offering him a toast, Prince Xinling said, "Shaolong you are indeed extraordinary, to be able to defeat more than 10,000 horse thieves with only 800 men. No wonder you can rise to

fame so swiftly in Zhao.”

Xiang Shaolong knows that this is his opening speech, and hurriedly expressed his humble thanks.

Prince Xinling raised his wine cup and was silent for a moment before continuing with a slight smile, “Everyone saw that the battle of Chang Ping greatly weakened the state of Zhao from a strong state, but very few people saw that the Qins also suffered heavy losses in this battle. How else could I have defeated the Qins in Handan six years ago if not for that, and subsequent the combined forces of Yue Cheng and Qing He from your state, together with the states Han, Chu and Bi also greatly defeated the Qins.”

Xiang Shaolong has no idea why he would bring up this matter, so he just bulldozed his way through to try and flatter him, saying “It’s all due to your intelligence and decisiveness that gave the Qins their most terrible defeat ever since Shang Yang changed the policies.”

Prince Xinling smiled proudly, “The King of Qin is a narrow minded. He has such a good general in Bai Qi but because of a fit of anger, forced him to his death. Fan Sui also gave up his premier post four years ago which greatly weakened Qin further, which gave us the opportunity to conquer Taojun. If my estimation is correct, the Qins can forget about regaining their strength within the next 20 years.”

Xiang Shaolong was secretly impressed and thought to himself that this Prince Xinling is indeed a talent of his times. Because from what he knows from the history books, it is

indeed 20 old years later that Qin manage to destroy the other six states.

Prince Xinling personally poured the wine and after drinking a toast, said solemnly, "Now that Lu Buwei caused the death of King Xiaowen, and allowed Yiren to ascend the throne and the world was in fear because they know how formidable Lu Buwei is. But I see it from another point of view. With the Qins being so suspicious of any outsiders, how can they allow Lu Buwei to control the politics, therefore there must be internal strife which will again weaken their plans to invade east."

Xiang Shaolong complimented him sincerely, "No wonder you are so well respected by the people, you can really analyze and understand the situations well."

Of course he knew that in the end Emperor Qin exterminated Lu Buwei's entire clan, that's why he is especially amazed by Prince Xinling's farsightedness. Among the four princes in the warring states period, he and Prince Mengchang emerged tops, and obviously he does live up to his name.

He thought of how frightened the Zhaos were once they heard that Lu Buwei is now in power and the contrast against Prince Xinling shows how bold and far-sighted he is. Prince Xinling's eyes gleamed and he sighed meaningfully, "Shaolong! If the three states were to unify, now is the time."

In truth, Xiang Shaolong is very much interested in this idea

because who can guarantee that history will not change. At least the Emperor of Qin now is a useless person, totally different from the smart and brave Emperor described in history books. Since he wants to deal with Zhao Mu, naturally he will need the help of Prince Xinling and once he thought of this, his heart started pounding.

Prince Xinling is indeed astute, just by studying his looks and behavior, he already knows what he is thinking and nodded his head with satisfaction, “My elder sister is indeed right about you, Shaolong is indeed a bold and intelligent man.”

He continued in a lowered voice, “Does Shaolong know that you are in a dangerous position where you will find it difficult to advance or retreat?”

Xiang Shaolong nodded his head to indicate his understanding.

However, Prince Xinling shook his head and smiled, “You don’t really know yet. Tell me! Do you know Hui Hu is which person’s trusted aide?”

Xiang Shaolong was stunned and asked, “Doesn’t Hui Hu take orders from your King?”

Prince Xinling replied, “That coward would not dare to touch anything that might incite public fury. Anli’s most beloved Lord Longyang⁴ handled all these secretive evil plans.

⁴ Lord Longyang is one of the most romanticized icons of male-male love from the Warring States period. Hundreds of years later, the famous Three Kingdoms poet Ruan Ji would write poems extolling this ancient beauty. The term Longyang is still used today as a term for a pretty boy in a homosexual relationship.

According to secret reports, Lord Longyang hates you to the core, that's why he forced Anli to give the orders not to allow your men to enter the city so that you'll be alone and helpless. If not for my strong support of you, Shaolong would have perished long ago."

Xiang Shaolong felt numb but also found the situation hilarious at the same time.

It was really unexpected that he would actually meet the famous Lord Longyang, whose name has long become synonymous with gays. Without a question, Anli and Lord Longyang's relationship is similar to King Xiaocheng's relationship with Zhao Mu. Apparently the royalty in this era, due to the two extremes in their lifestyle of extravagance and constant fear of losing their lives, have all turned a little abnormal.

Prince Xinling said, "Lord Longyang is one of the three most famous swordsmen in the state of Wei. He is intelligent and cunning, and certainly not easy to deal with."

Xiang Shaolong sighed and said, "We can consider this to pose difficulty in me advancing, but why can't I retreat then?"

Prince Xinling stared at him for a moment before saying calmly, "Because if you return to Zhao, Zhao Mu will certainly try to take your life."

Xiang Shaolong remembered that Lady Pingyuan once told him that the King of Zhao has taken a liking to him, and if that's really the case, what Prince Xinling just told him is not

just to scare him. He sighed and said, "To tell you the truth, I was ordered to come to Wei this time with another secret mission, which is to steal the 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual'."

He obviously knows that Prince Xinling is already aware of this, so he said it out first to gain his trust. As expected Prince Xinling chortled, reached out and patted his shoulder and exclaimed, "Great! It's only now that I believe you really have the intention of allying yourself with us. If you can work for me well, I can guarantee you endless wealth and riches."

He continued in a quiet voice, "That fellow Anli, under Lord Longyang's persuasion, is not busy preparing to eliminate Zhao. So even though Hui Hu is totally unrelated to him, he will never let a talent like you return. As for Zhao Qian, not only will she not be able to become the Crown Princess, her fate will be extremely terrible as well."

Xiang Shaolong sighed helplessly and asked, "What should we do now?"

Prince Xinling smiled slightly. "The one who strikes first will gain the upper hand, the one who strikes later will be at the mercy of others. Does Shaolong understand these words?"

Xiang Shaolong suddenly felt himself sweating, finally understanding that Prince Xinling said so much to him because he is still intent on the initial plan he made with lady Pingyuan and Prince Shaoyuan, which is to assassinate King Anli. So he is just a pawn now. He was so furious that he felt like giving himself two tight slaps. How stupid and naive he was to actually believe that the vicious Lady Pingyuan would

really fall in love with him. Lady Pingyuan is indeed formidable, deliberately pretending to be unhappy with Prince Shaoyuan, and flattering him at the same time, saying that she wants a child with him so that he'll be taken in. If not for the fact that he overheard the talk she had with her son that night, he won't even know how he died. That vicious woman actually slowly made her progress, sacrificing her body to lure him in, kept on flattering him with the only aim of using his bravery, intelligence, martial arts skill and status to help them kill the King of Wei. After that they will push the blame to him and the Zhaos, so that they can retreat safely from this matter. Such a venomous ploy is indeed enough to make one's blood run cold.

In order not to arouse the other party's suspicions, he pretended to be full of vigor as he replied, "If there is anything I can do, please let me know. I am willing to go through fire and water."

Prince Xinling exclaimed happily, "With these words from you, why should I worry that the plan will not work."

He continued in a straight face, "I already have a plan in mind, but it's not the time to let you know yet. You can enjoy yourselves for these few days, I have a lot of beauties in my residence and you can choose anyone to serve you."

Xiang Shaolong had an idea and deliberately tested the waters by saying, "With Lady Ya around, I am already satisfied."

A look of anger and jealousy flashed past Prince Xinling's

eyes but he immediately changed it into a warm smile, "You really know how to choose. Zhao Ya is extremely captivating, truly a fine specimen in a man's private room. Go ahead and enjoy yourself!"

He added, "You'll have a good rest tonight. I'll arrange some activities for you tomorrow and I can guarantee that your trip will not be in vain."

After Xiang Shaolong left the hall, he walked towards where Zhao Ya and the rest were residing at, knowing very well that in order to gain his trust, Prince Xinling will not restrict his activities in the manor nor send anyone to spy on him. Once he stepped into the garden, he immediately thought of Mei Canniang's quiet little mountain valley. If he can spend the rest of his life in that place where there's no fights, then won't all his troubles be gone? Pride and ambition is really the downfall of many. Xiang Shaolong suddenly felt dejection and an extreme weariness about the things that has been happening around him. Especially when he thought of Lady Pingyuan, he felt that pain of being cheated and hurt.

After walking past a row of old, luxuriant swaying trees, the 'Flying Clouds Chambers' which Zhao Ya and the rest are residing in came into view. Lanterns were lighted on the pillars and the eaves of the corridors and under the illumination of the lanterns, it can be seen that the corridors have double eaves. The roof was decorated with tiles and statues of beasts, extremely colorful and majestic. The paint and carvings on the main door was exquisite, the curtains on

the windows were thick, with a soft and hazy light going through it.

Xiang Shaolong suddenly felt lost. That feeling of a strange dream filled him again. Hai! If only it really is a dream. Even when he was facing the worst situation in Zhao, he has never felt so dejected. Just like what Prince Xinling said, even if he can escape from Wei, he'll face death when he goes back as well, unless he can get his hands on 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual'. But by then those troops pursuing him will certainly include Prince Xinling's men as well.

This Prince Xinling is even more difficult to handle than the King of Wei, or else the Qins would not have suffered heavy losses under him. If he really manages to unite the three states, for all you know he may really be able to take over Emperor Qin and become the world's ruler. Can history really be changed?

Xiang Shaolong lied down on Lady Ya's couch dejectedly. Zhao Ya sat down and reached out to caress his face, asking in alarm, "Shaolong what happened to you, why do you look so bad."

Xiang Shaolong carried her up the bed and buried his head in her chest and sighed, "If I have 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual' with me now, I will steal all of you out of Daliang immediately and run far, far away."

Zhao Ya's delicate body shook a little as she cried out, "Shaolong! Can you brace yourself? Seeing you like this pains me."

She went to his ear and whispered, "Anli has got nothing to do with the order not to allow Cheng Xu and the rest into the city."

Xiang Shaolong raised his head up in surprise and looked at her, "How did you know?"

Lady Ya covered her mouth and smiled, "Don't ever think that we are totally helpless to defend, us Zhaos have spies all over the place. I even have my own people in Prince Xinling's residence."

The look in her eyes turned icy as she continued, "This matter must be related to Prince Xinling, to deliberately isolate you and give you the feeling that there's danger everywhere so that he and his sister can control you."

Xiang Shaolong perked up immediately and he sat up, his eyes gleaming, "Have you found out where 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual is hidden?"

Lady Ya stared at him unbelievably and said, "If you obviously know that someone is coming to steal your things, will you let others find out so easily?"

She then stood up and took out a scrolled painting from a cloth sack and unrolled it on the bed. It turns out to be the floor plan of Prince Xinling's residence. Xiang Shaolong was ecstatic, "Where did you get such a good thing from?"

Lady Ya smiled at him coquettishly, "Don't forget what I'm an expert in. If I can't even get this, how can I steal more important things?"

Xiang Shaolong thought of something and asked, "If there really is a 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual', why isn't Prince Xinling starting to manufacture the equipment according to the diagrams instead, why would he be keeping it in his residence?"

Lady Ya replied, "This involves the fight between Prince Xinling and the King of Wei. As long as Prince Xinling has not gotten his hands on the imperial throne, he will not take the secret manual out. Therefore the manual must be kept in a secret location in his residence."

Xiang Shaolong sighed, "I'm afraid that even before I can find the secret manual, that conniving Prince Xinling would already have killed me."

Lady Ya suddenly extended her fair arms and covered his mouth, the soft and tender feeling shooting like electricity straight into Xiang Shaolong's heart. She pouted, "Don't say anything inauspicious, all right?"

Xiang Shaolong sniffed in her fragrance and felt a little better. He took a close look at the map on the bed, silently committing to memory the positions of the houses in the residence. He had strict training on such matters before, so naturally he has a way of memorizing things.

Lady Ya saw that he has regained his confidence and calmness so she happily explained to him the layout of the residence.

Xiang Shaolong finally recovered from his depression and asked, "Do you have a way to make contact with Wu Zhuo

and the rest?”

Lady Ya said with pride, “Such a simple matter, just leave it to me!”

Xiang Shaolong was silent for a moment before continuing, “Tell Wu Zhuo to try and dig a tunnel from the camp to another location. If something happens, it may very well save lives?”

Lady Ya’s expression changed, “Is the situation that bad? We are after all representatives of the King of Zhao...”

Xiang Shaolong interrupted her, “If you know that the King of Wei has the intention of attacking Zhao, you won’t be saying that. We’ve really made a wrong trip this time.” As he spoke, he went off the bed.

Lady Ya pulled him and asked, “Aren’t you accompanying me?”

Xiang Shaolong replied, “Prince Xinling will force me to assassinate the King of Wei anytime, time is running short. I must find the hiding place of ‘Lu Gong’s Secret Manual’.”

Lady Ya was greatly startled, “There are ferocious dogs guarding Wei Wuji’s residence, he’ll certainly find out if you enter.”

Xiang Shaolong laughed, “You’re the expert thief. You’ll definitely have a way to deal with ferocious dogs.”

Lady Ya rolled her eyes at him and took out a small bottle from her bag and gave it to him, saying, “Just a little of this

powder on your body, the ferocious dogs will avoid you. But not only are there ferocious dogs, there are guards as well! Hai! Since I know that you'll be risking your life, how can I sleep in peace tonight?"

Xiang Shaolong took the bottle, hugged and gave her a kiss and said, "Just strip and wait for me on the bed without a worry! I guarantee that no one will be able to see me."

CHAPTER 10
Meeting Longyang
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG returned to his room and after dismissing the four pretty maids from their duties and ministrations, he changed into his black suit and carried his tools. He was about to slip out from the window when a maid called out, "Lady Pingyuan arrives."

Footsteps were heard and Lady Pingyuan is already at the door.

There was no time for Xiang Shaolong to remove his outfit so in his haste he just grabbed an outer robe and draped it on.

By then Lady Pingyuan has already entered the room.

Lady Pingyuan closed the door, leaned against it and looked at him with a hidden smile.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly lamenting, as soon as she touches him, she'll find out immediately about the tools he had on him and with her intelligence, of course she'll know what he's trying to do.

But if he does not hug and kiss her, it would be a deviate from his normal reaction and it will arouse her suspicions.

What should he do?

He suddenly had an idea.

Xiang Shaolong sat back on the couch, patting on the bed next to him and said with an ulterior motive, "Beauty! Come! This time there will be no one who can disturb us."

Lady Pingyuan blushed and pouted, "Have you forgotten that I'm about to be married?"

Xiang Shaolong's ploy was working and he replied, "I thought you are the one who forgot, that's why you came to my room to look for me. Besides, didn't Lady ask me to give you a child? If you don't climb up my bed, how am I supposed to impregnate you?"

Lady Pingyuan replied calmly, "Will you be a little patient? My wedding will be held next spring, and we'll have all the fun we want the month before my wedding so that person will not suspect that I'm not expecting his son at all."

Xiang Shaolong expected her to say this, because it's a good excuse for her to reject him and at the same time appease him so that he will not suspect that she's plotting against him.

If he does not come up with a good plan two months later, he will soon be dead.

This woman is so vicious!

He has never hated a woman so much, especially when she's so mature and seductive and her status so esteemed.

He stood up and walked towards her, until he was so close he's almost touching her bosom. He reached out, grabbed her soft shoulders and kissed her lips.

Lady Pingyuan's reaction was sizzling, her delicate body writhing in excitement but she was unable to touch Xiang Shaolong's body and find out about his secret.

After a long moment, the two lips parted.

The two of them exchanged looks, their hands held together, panting.

Lady Pingyuan could not take the flirtation any further and panted, "Shaolong! Hug me!"

Xiang Shaolong shook his head and said with a smile, "Unless you are willing to go to Mount Wu with me, or else I will not touch any other part of your body except for your dainty lips."

Lady Pingyuan was baffled, "What is 'go to Mount Wu'?"

It was only then that Xiang Shaolong remembered that this wonderful term is not being used during this era yet, so he made up a story, "Mount Wu is a huge mountain near my hometown. Legend has it that when men goes there, they will have intimate fun with the fairies in the mountain, so the term go to Mount Wu means going to bed and having fun, does Lady understand now?"

Lady Pingyuan's bright eyes revealed her dilemma and Xiang Shaolong was shocked, afraid that she will change her mind so he hurriedly ask, "Why has Lady come to look for me?"

Lady Pingyuan regained her senses and pouted, "Do I need to have a reason to look for you?"

Xiang Shaolong had an idea and took the risk, "Lady better remind Prince Xinling that Lady Ya seems very confident of stealing Lu Gong's Secret Manual, I think she already knows where the manual is hidden."

Lady Pingyuan's pretty face turned icy as she said, "That slut doesn't even know she's at death's door. No matter how capable she is, she can forget about even touching the secret manual."

Xiang Shaolong queried, "Are you planning to kill her?"

Lady Pingyuan knew that she has made a slip of the tongue and with her expression remained unchanged, she explained, "That was just said in a fit of anger. Shaolong! You can't possibly have fallen in love with that slutty woman!"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "I don't know if I have fallen for her,

but she is truly infatuated with me, so I do not wish to see any untoward befall her.”

Lady Pingyuan tried to struggle out of his grasp angrily, “Let me go!”

Xiang Shaolong smiled, “Lady is jealous!” He still held on to her shoulder tightly and kissed her lips again.

Under his flirtatious and hot kisses, Lady Pingyuan softened.

Their mouths parted. Lady Pingyuan sighed helplessly again.

Xiang Shaolong knows that she is in a dilemma. On one hand she wants to cause harm to him, but on the other hand she can’t help but to look for him to alleviate her loneliness of so many years. Of course he will not uncover her plot so he changed the topic, “What is Lady’s future husband like?”

Lady Pingyuan turned silent before replying, “He is the great general Bai Gui. Have you heard of him?”

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that this must be another political agreement, why would he be interested to know, so he leaned forward and kissed her neck.

Lady Pingyuan has gone without physical intimacy for so long, so how can she tolerate such excitement so she struggled and cried out, “No!”

Xiang Shaolong left her and looked at her with a smile.

Lady Pingyuan struggled out of his grasp and pushed the door open, saying, “I am leaving!”

Xiang Shaolong sent her out the door and said, “Since you’re

not accompanying me, I'll have to look for Lady Ya."

Lady Pingyuan saw that the four guards waiting outside the door seem to be listening on the conversation so she left after giving him a stare.

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be going towards Flying Clouds Chambers but once he turned the corner and saw no one around, he removed his outer clothes and hid them. Using the hook and ropes, he climbed up the roof and followed Lady Pingyuan from afar, walking either on the roof or corridors or using the big trees as camouflage.

For a person as careful as Lady Pingyuan, once she hears what he told her, she will certainly warn Prince Xinling!

There are countless rooms in the vast residence and the nearer they got to the inner courtyards, the tighter the security with high walls and watch towers. If not for the fact that Xiang Shaolong had once undergone strict training, and has seen the floor plan of the residence and has the appropriate equipment, there's no way he will be able to infiltrate the place.

There are alarm drums atop the watch towers, so one can imagine that in an emergency, once the signal is sounded, action will be swift.

At this time Lady Pingyuan, under the escort of the four guards, walked into a corridor.

The walls on both sides were long and tall which leads to an open area. Luckily there were a few rows of tall trees, or else

there'd be no way for him to sneak in undiscovered.

Facing the entrance to the courtyard is a large building, in front of its door there are two rows of 18 guards and outside the house there are guards patrolling with guard dogs.

Very carefully, Xiang Shaolong used the hook and ropes and jumped onto the roof from the tall tree nearest to the building.

Lady Pingyuan went into the building alone and after passing a broad well, went to the main hall to meet Prince Xinling.

Wei Wuji was lying on the rug, his right and left arms each holding a beauty and was drinking and enjoying himself. Even when he saw his elder sister, he continued with his flirtations.

The decoration in the hall was exquisite and the colors matching. The glow from the lanterns soothing was giving one a very comfortable feeling.

Lady Pingyuan sat down opposite Prince Xinling.

Prince Xinling suddenly grabbed one of the women by her hair and pulled her head back.

The woman tilted her head back and under the luminance of the lantern, the beauty's alluring face was revealed to Xiang Shaolong who was hanging upside down outside the window. Looking at her fair neck, he can't help but gulp and at the same time felt pity for her.

Prince Xinling then went towards her fair neck and started

kissing and biting her violently, causing that beauty's body to shake and squirm and she was moaning as well. Obviously she is in pain and not pleasure.

By the time Prince Xinling's mouth left her, the tender and fair skin on her neck is full of teeth marks, and there was a faint trace of blood as well.

The other lady seems to be unperturbed, still smiling and not revealing any look of surprise at all.

Prince Xinling chortled madly and still pulling that woman's hair, asked Lady Pingyuan, "Do you think this woman is comparable to that slut Zhao Ya."

Lady Pingyuan sighed and said, "Wuji! You're jealous!"

Prince Xinling pushed that beauty away and shouted, "Scram!"

The two women hurriedly ran to the back hall to hide.

Prince Xinling took a gulp from the wine bottle and wiped his mouth with his sleeve and said furiously, "That bitch Zhao Ya, when I defeated the Qin army, she was all condescending towards me in Handan. But look at how she is treating me now, I will make her sorry."

Lady Pingyuan furrowed her brows, "Where's your patience gone? Can't you even wait for a few days? Have you seen Zhao Ya?"

Prince Xinling waved his hands, "Don't talk about her. Only now do I believe your words. Zhao Ya sacrificed her body

because of her adoration for Zhao Mu. When I destroy Zhao in future, I will certainly make Zhao Mu have a taste of all the forms of torture in the world.”

Lady Pingyuan said through gritted teeth, “I can’t wait to eat his flesh and drink his blood as well. If not for him, how could Prince Pingyuan, Zhao Sheng die so early for naught?”

She then told him what she heard from Xiang Shaolong about Lady Ya’s confidence in stealing the secret manual.

Prince Xinling seems unbothered and said, “Even if that slut knows that the secret manual is in the secret underground room here, security here is so tight she can forget about sneaking in. Don’t worry!”

Xiang Shaolong who was outside the window was ecstatic. Firstly he has confirmed that there indeed is a secret manual and it’s in one of the secret rooms in this building. With a special task force agent like him, it is a big possibility that he can steal the secret manual.

Lady Pingyuan commented, “It’s still better to be careful!”

Prince Xinling replied, “I have already increased security. Even if she can get the manual, she can forget about taking it out of the residence.”

Lady Pingyuan was silent for a moment before asking, “How are relations between you and Anli now?”

A flash of anger went past Prince Xinling’s eyes as he said coldly, “That old idiot is belittling me more and more. He only knows how to place his trust on petty people like Lord

Longyang, Lou Wu, Su Song, Guan Pi etc. If I allow him to have his unruly way, our Great Wei will be destroyed sooner or later.”

Lady Pingyuan asked, “When are you going to arrange for Xiang Shaolong to see Anli?”

Prince Xinling replied, “Now we’re using the excuse that Zhao Qian is not used to the conditions here so she can’t enter the palace to meet Anli yet, so that we can have more time to prepare. But this matter cannot be delayed. I’ve decided that on the first of the next month, which is three days later, we’ll let Xiang Shaolong officially send Zhao Qian into the palace. Anli will certainly set a feast to welcome time and that will be the time to take action.”

He paused and continued, “You better tie Xiang Shaolong tightly with love so that he will risk his life for us without a doubt.”

Lady Pingyuan sighed sadly, “You’d better find another way to retain him, I’m a little afraid to see him.”

Prince Xinling was startled, “You can’t possibly have fallen for him?”

Lady Pingyuan stood up and sighed again, shaking her head, “The grander picture is of more importance, what is a personal loss? It’s just that I’m afraid that once I have a sexual relation with him and have his child, that’ll be even worse.”

She turned around to leave as she finished her words.

Xiang Shaolong was at a loss. He was stunned for a moment, and waited until after Prince Xinling went into the inner hall before he sneaked into the main hall and did a quick check. He only left secretly when he has made sure that the secret underground room is not beneath this hall.

Xiang Shaolong burrowed beneath the blanket, holding Lady Ya's burning body, so comfortable that he was moaning.

Ever since he came to Daliang, he has this horrible feeling that he's lost in an angry sea. It's only when he's hugging this beauty can he feel a short moment of relaxation and safety. It doesn't matter if this feeling is so feeble or fake, it's still enough to make one intoxicated enough to treasure it.

It's the first time he felt no barriers or distance between him and Zhao Ya.

The two of them used all their might to hug each other, enjoying the brief pleasure during this difficult time.

Lady Ya kissed his ears as she asked, "Why don't you go and take a look at Third Princess?"

Xiang Shaolong sighed, "I'm afraid I won't be able to hold myself back with her and when I return to Zhao later, Zhao Mu will surely use this to trap me."

Lady Ya kissed him approvingly and said, "It's rare that you're so alert, Xiang Lang! Zhao Ya loves you."

Xiang Shaolong replied sincerely, "I love you too!"

He then told her in detail what he has overheard.

Zhao Ya said, "The underground room must be beneath Prince Xinling's bedroom. Xiang Lang is so capable to be able to infiltrate into such a highly guarded place. This must be out of that conniving thief's expectations."

Xiang Shaolong replied, "It may not be difficult to steal the secret manual, but the difficult part is getting you 12 weak and dainty beauties out of Daliang."

Zhao Ya replied, "All residences belonging to royalty and officials will certainly have a secret passageway for escape. If we can find this passageway, there's the possibility of escaping from the mansion. But even if we can get out, we won't be able to slip out of the city."

Xiang Shaolong was inspired by her words and sat up. He thought that if there is a passageway, it will certainly be behind Prince Xinling's residence, because he has checked the floor in the main hall and did not find anything.

Lady Ya sat up with him and laid in his arms, asking, "Shaolong! What have you thought of?"

Xiang Shaolong explained, "If there is a secret passageway, it must be connected with the secret room which holds Lu Gong's Secret Manual. That is only reasonable. Also, there will be more than one entrance to this passageway, so as long as we can find just one of the entrances, we will be able to move freely in here."

Lady Ya smiled coquettishly, "Leave this to me, I guarantee that I will not disappoint."

Xiang Shaolong hugged her tightly and laughed, "Zhao Ya is so obedient, how I shall thank you?"

Zhao Ya was about to reply when someone knocked on the door, followed by Zhao Qian's sad voice calling out, "Can Qian'er come in?"

When Xiang Shaolong woke up, the bed was filled with a fragrant smell.

Zhao Ya and Zhao Qian were on either side of him, hugging him tightly.

With Zhao Qian around last night, he did not have fun with Lady Ya and naturally he dared not touch Zhao Qian as well. But that kind of intoxicating feeling was alluring enough as well.

After having a good sleep, all the dejection he felt yesterday was swept away.

He has let go of everything else and did not step out of Flying Clouds Chamber the whole morning, spending the time chatting happily with the two ladies and the maids.

At noon, Prince Xinling sent someone to ask for him.

At the outer hall, Prince Xinling was sitting with three other people, having tea. On seeing his arrival, he immediately introduced them and they turned out to be famous mercenary in his residence.

One of them, who was large built and ugly, was Zhu Hai. When Prince Xinling stole the military token to defeat Qin

years ago, it was all thanks to him who hid a 40jin hammer and used it to kill the General Jin Bi who was leading the military. He is one of the famed fiercest general in the world.

The other two are Tan Bang and Yue Xing. The former was heavily bearded and looked like a Confucian scholar while the latter was short and stout, with a glance one can tell that he's a highly skilled pugilist.

Prince Xinling smiled, "It's the first time Shaolong has been here, let me bring you around and after lunch we can meet the most talented and beautiful lady in Daliang and let's see if you can manage to impress her."

Xiang Shaolong immediately thought of the 'Shi Shaonu' whom Lady Ya once mentioned and he was immediately invigorated and followed them out of the house.

The five of them went separately in two horse carriages and under the protection of 20 odd guards, toured Daliang.

The carriage went past the route they took when they arrived, which passed the imperial palace.

The buildings were grouped magnificently together with carvings of phoenixes and dragons, with lush woods surrounding them. But when Xiang Shaolong thought of when these pretty buildings will soon become unrecognizable ruins, he felt a great pity.

Along the walls of the palace, there were river ways intercrossed with roads and bridge, looking extremely picturesque.

After leaving the palace area, they turned into a bustling street linking the north and south.

Strangely, there's a path right in the middle of the large street, which is extremely flat with locust trees planted thickly on both sides, and next to them were wide drains. The pedestrian walkway is on the outer area of the drains.

Prince Xinling explained, "This is an official pathway reserved only for the use of his Majesty and officials with the ranks of dukes and above. Commoners are not allowed to step on it."

As he spoke, the carriage as already turned into the official pathway.

At the southern end of the official path was tightly knitted residential and commercial areas, the layout was organized although chaotic in a way as well. Ladies, gentlemen and merchants were moving around the crowd with people talking and bumping into one another, making the place look extremely exciting and prosperous.

They had lunch at the largest restaurant in this area, Dan Yang Lou. This restaurant has its front facing the main street and its back against a small river and was very exquisite.

They took up a large private room near the river on the second level and when they've had some drinks, that Tan Bang became very chatty, revealing his scholarly nature. No wonder Prince Xinling would invite him along to accompany them.

Although Zhu Hai and Yue Xing were more into martial arts,

they too listened intently.

It's the first time Xiang Shaolong has heard such an in-depth and witty analysis of current affairs and was very much intrigued.

Right then Prince Xinling asked, "Amongst the many schools of thought, which school and which person is the best?"

Tan Bang smiled and took his time to reply, "Although it's said that rivers all flow in different ways, but in today's time they have all merged. From what I see, amongst the modern people now, Zou Yan and Xun Qing from Qi and Master Fei from Han have all the accomplishments of learned men before our time, and can also do more than what has been done by our forefathers. Their teachings will certainly be the way to go for future ideals on managing a state."

Naturally Xiang Shaolong knows who Xun Zi and Han Fei are, but he does not know the background of Zou Yan at all and asked, "Who is Zou Yan?"

Everyone looked at him in surprise.

Prince Xinling commented, "I did not know that Shaolong don't even know who this famous and rare person is."

He continued with a mysterious smile, "Let me introduce you later."

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, could it be that this Zou Yan is living in that Shi Cainu's house, or else how could he see him so easily?

Tan Bang lowered his voice, "Mister Zou may be one of the rare talents in the world now, but he is famous now because the situation made him so."

Everyone hurriedly asked him for the reason.

Tan Bang sighed and revealed a sad expression, "Ever since the weakening of the Zhous, the world has been without a leader and the various states fighting amongst themselves. All the suffering commoners were praying for the appearance of the true ruler so that all these wars can be stopped. Mister Zou's teachings of the five morals said: listen to the words and obey the orders. Everyone hopes that he can give some hint so that they will know who will be the master of the new era."

A gleam flashed in Prince Xinling's eyes, because he has long regarded himself as the savior in these difficult times, and he is working hard towards this goal.

Xiang Shaolong used to be so sure that the ruler of the new era would be Emperor Qin, but after knowing the true situation here, he was confused again.

Tan Bang lowered his voice, "From what I see, the new ruler will certainly be Prince."

Prince Xinling coughed dryly to cover the excitement he felt and said, "That Zou Yan whom Mister Tan was referring to may be famous, but he came from Jixia that comes out with wild theories. From what I see he's just someone who speaks empty."

Tan Bang replied with a straight face, "No, this person is very different from those madmen at Jixia. He is a defender of Confucius's teachings and does not look highly upon the words of Mohism. If Prince has some free time, you should read his works in detail."

Prince Xinling pretended to appear very magnanimous and replied, "Thank you for your pointers."

Tan Bang was about to talk about Han Fei when footsteps could be heard outside the door and the soldier who was guarding outside the door came in and reported, "Lord Longyang requests for an audience!"

Prince Xinling and Xiang Shaolong were extremely surprised, they did not expect Lord Longyang would be so bold to actually come looking for them.

Those who come are without good intentions.

Prince Xinling sat proudly, having no intention of rising to greet him at all and said loudly, "If Lord Longyang has no intention to drink then it will best that you do not come in."

He is obviously not giving Lord Longyang any face with these words. Obviously, their relation is so strained that they are openly at war.

Zhu Hai's gaze turned icy as he asked, "Does Prince wants me to guard the door for you?"

Prince Xinling shook his head with a smile.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly impressed. Prince Xinling's

expression can remain totally unchanged even if Mount Tai was collapsing in front of him, and this is precisely the secret to his success. At the same time he felt a little anticipation as well, wanting to find out exactly how 'charming' is this Lord Longyang whose fame amongst men has extended through history.

A gentle and melodious voice that could have belonged to either a man or a woman answered from outside the door, "Why is Prince Xinling so upset, have I offended you in any way? Then all the more Longyang has to come in and offer my apologies."

Xiang Shaolong felt his hair stand on hearing the voice. He did not expect that just Lord Longyang's voice is already so intolerable.

Prince Xinling chortled, "No need for apologies!"

He added with a shout, "Aren't you letting our esteemed guest in!"

The door opened. 5 men came in.

Xiang Shaolong stared at Lord Longyang who was at the head of the line, stunned for a moment.

His pretty look is unparalleled, his skin fairer and softer than a woman. His long eyes full of life and he walked daintily, like a little grass bending from the gentle breeze. If he were to dress up as a woman, he will definitely be an unrivalled beauty.

He was at least half a head shorter than Xiang Shaolong, but

his build was proportionate, his arms and limbs slender.

The warrior outfit he wore was exquisite, with a dark green as the base embroidered with pretty silk flowers, very eye catching.

The hat he wore was even better, made in the shape of a romantic and exaggerated tiger's face, and behind the hat there's even a tiger's tail.

Although Xiang Shaolong has no interest in men, he has to admit that Lord Longyang is indeed very 'pretty'.

If not for the long sword he hung on his waist, Xiang Shaolong will never remember that Prince Xinling once told him that he is one of Wei's three greatest swordsmen.

You will never be on your guard against such a dainty and weak looking man.

If one were to only compare beauty, Lian Jin would not be able to catch up with him even if he's on a horse.

As for the other four, with one look it's obvious that they are top swordsmen, especially the short and stout man behind Lord Longyang on the right. His eyes were gleaming and he has an aura of death. He looks like one who loves a fight, and others will not dare to belittle him.

Lord Longyang walked daintily to the table and sat down gently. He threw a flirtatious look at Prince Xinling first before his glittering eyes traveled past the others seated around the table, landing at last on Xiang Shaolong's face. He stared at him for a moment before 'giggling',

“Commander Xiang, I’ve missed you so badly!”

Xiang Shaolong felt himself go numb from his stare and thought to himself that this person is so coquettish that he must have long disregarded himself as a man. The thought grossed him out so much that for a moment he does not know how to handle him and can only smile stiffly, “I do not have any capabilities at all, so how could I have caused Lord Longyang to miss me so much?”

Prince Xinling personally filled Lord Longyang’s winecup and said with a smile, “I’d like to hear about it as well.”

Lord Longyang ‘smiled daintily’ and replied, “Commander Xiang was able to kill Lian Jin, a good fighter from Wei, and execute the horrible horse thief Hui Hu, obviously you really have the talent, so how can I not like you?”

Zhu Hai and the rest were furrowing their brows as they heard the conversation but there’s nothing they can do to him.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly startled, this person was ‘smiling coquettishly’, and the eyes looking at him were ‘full of feelings’, not a trace of hatred towards him was revealed. This ‘smiling with a dagger hidden’ is enough to make one’s heart run cold.

Prince Xinling chortled, “Come! Let us drink a toast to Lord Longyang’s affection.”

He swept his eyes across and his stern look landed on the four swordsmen standing behind Lord Longyang and cried

out, "Offer the wine!"

Naturally there will be someone who will offer wine to those four.

Everyone there had their own secret intentions, but all drank the toast.

Except for Lord Longyang who did not move. He waited until everyone has drunk the wine before pouring it on the ground next to him, saying shyly, "Let's offer this wine to the Earth Deity, to celebrate the number one swordsman from Zhao stepping on our Great Wei's soil."

Even with Prince Xinling's control, his composure changed slightly as he uttered coldly, "I've specially arranged a lot of programs for Shaolong today, if Lord Longyang has no other matters, please forgive us as we will be leaving immediately."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly cheering. In truth he was starting to get irritated with Lord Longyang effeminate way of talking.

At the same time he was thinking to himself, if this Lord's swordplay is as effeminate and willowy as him, it will be quite difficult to deal with. If during the duel he's as irritated as he's feeling now which makes him rash and anxious, he might lose because of it.

Lord Longyang laughed, his 'pretty eyes' looking at Xiang Shaolong joyously as he said effeminately, "I came here today is to see how heroic and brave Commander Xiang is.

It's such a small request, I'm sure Master Wuji will not reject me!"

Prince Xinling and Xiang Shaolong exchanged looks, extremely annoyed but they really found it difficult to reject.

A gleam came over Xiang Shaolong's eyes, and looking at this man famed for his beauty, he laughed and asked, "I wonder if Lord Longyang is going to test me personally or will you let your men do it?"

Prince Xinling interrupted, "Weapons do not have eyes. If Lord Longyang is fighting personally, then forgive me for not agreeing to this."

Lord Longyang 'giggled', "Since Master is so protective of me I will let Sha Xuan take on Commander Xiang!"

Prince Xinling and the rest revealed a look of alarm and they looked towards the short and stout man whom Xiang Shaolong was scrutinizing earlier. This made Xiang Shaolong affirm his guess that this person must be a ferocious fighter who has won many duels.

That Sha Xuan took a step forward and said loudly, "Sha Xuan is willing to take some pointers from Commander Xiang's excellent swordplay!"

Xiang Shaolong knows that this duel is unavoidable, besides this also involves the reputation of Zhao. So he respectfully sought Prince Xinling's permission, asking, "Will Prince allow Shaolong to accept the duel!"

Prince Xinling was very confident about him, and at the same

time he wanted to see for himself his swordplay as well, so he replied with a smile, "Sha Xuan is our Majesty's skilled fighter, Shaolong must be careful."

He continued loudly, "This is purely an exchange of pointers, so I hope both of you will control your attacks."

He then shouted, "Men! Clear a space for a duel in the hall here!"

He had just spoken his words when the sounds of tables and chairs being moved could be heard outside the room.

Lord Longyang smiled and stood up gently.

Xiang Shaolong was stunned as well; no wonder the King of Wei is so besotted with this person. All his movements are fluid, beautiful, his expressions alluring. Once you are with him for some time, it's difficult not to treat him as a woman.

Lord Longyang bowed slightly towards Xiang Shaolong and laughed daintily, "I will wait outside for Commander Xiang."

And he walked out of the room with his men, his hips swaying.

Prince Xinling looked at his disappearing back view, his eyes shone and he lowered his voice and said icily, "Kill Sha Xuan for me!"

CHAPTER 11
Little House By The Lake
[Translated by JEAN]

AFTER the tables and things were moved to the corners, there was a large empty space.

All the guests were asked to leave the upper level, leaving only men from both sides.

Sha Xuan and Xiang Shaolong stood facing each other in the middle of the hall. The sunlight streamed in from a large window at the side, illuminating the ground near the window in a golden glow.

Lord Longyang was very confident in his man, and was

looking at Xiang Shaolong with a coquettish smile. However his subordinates were looking at Xiang Shaolong as if they did not think highly of him.

Sha Xuan's swordplay is very famous in Daliang, and he is the leader of the eight senior imperial guards belonging to King Anli, one of the most feared characters in Daliang.

Prince Xinling may look calm and composed on the surface, but he is secretly feeling nervous. If Xiang Shaolong were to unfortunately perish in the duel, then his plan to assassinate King Anli would have gone down the drain. But if he can kill the other party, there will be one less obstacle when assassinating the King of Wei.

"Clang!"

Sha Xuan removed his sword from the scabbard, and for a moment a cold ray was emitted. He seemed to have changed into another person, holding on to his sword heroically and retreated three steps. His retreat reverberated through the wooden floor, the sound of his steps loud.

Although he retreated, his impressive aura was increasing instead of decreasing and the spectators at the side all felt stifled and was shocked.

Xiang Shaolong could feel his opponent's fierce and vicious aura, so he recollected his thoughts and entered into Mozi Swordplay's world of quiet defense, and did not look into his opponent's sharp and piercing eyes.

Men on both sides saw that Xiang Shaolong was unmoving despite being oppressed by his opponent's fierce aura. He stood straight, his composure calm, and they were all surprised. They did not know that it is the essence of Mozi swordplay to counter movement with calmness.

Sha Xuan felt displeased, because in the past when he defeated his enemies, he relied on his special fierce aura to make his opponent frightened before attacking swiftly and strongly so that his opponent will shed blood within five steps. However, he did not expect that this person in front of him is not at all affected by his aura and this made him lose his bearings instead. But by now there's no room for retreat, so he roared and attacked with his sword.

Lord Longyang and the men immediately cheered to boost his morale.

This sword attack was as swift as lightning, aiming straight towards Xiang Shaolong's forehead, filled with a strong force that cannot be retracted.

Xiang Shaolong's Flying Rainbow is still in his scabbard, as if he has no intention of retaliating at all. It was only until the sword was almost upon his head and Prince Xinling and the rest were beginning to worry for him that his body moved suddenly and diagonally across and came in front of the large window which sunlight streamed in. He was still looking at his opponent coolly, his eyes filled with unparalleled and strong determination.

He came from a background of strict and elite military

training, and is adept at using the environment to bring out the best in his fighting ability. Since he accepted the challenge, he is determined to get rid of his opponent in the shortest time possible. Firstly to curb some of Lord Longyang's air, and secondly to make Prince Xinling think even more highly of himself.

He is extremely experience in combat and very good at eyeing others out. With a look at Sha Xuan's stance, he knows that this person has very strong arms and specializes in vicious and dangerous attacks. That's why he avoided his sword attack to throw the opponent off guard.

Sha Xuan roared angrily, and followed his sword again to make another attack.

Xiang Shaolong laughed long and loud, Flying Rainbow came out of the scabbard like lightning and he held the treasured sword diagonally away from his body at a 45-degree angle on the side. It immediately captured the afternoon sunlight that was glaring in from the window and reflected the ray of sunlight into Sha Xuan's round and fearsome eyes.

Never in his dreams did Sha Xuan imagine that there would be a kind of swordplay against an opponent, which makes use of sunlight in a room. He felt a strong glare in front of him and for a moment he could not see anything at all.

How can Xiang Shaolong let such a rare opportunity go? So he avoided his opponent's sword and his sword slashed diagonally, like the wind. For a moment, blood poured and a scream was heard. The fresh blood pouring from the side of

Sha Xuan's neck gradually ebbed as he fell to the ground.

His sword had sliced his opponent's throat, and everyone knows that there's no way Sha Xuan will survive.

Men on both sides could feel cold sweat coming out from their pores as they witnessed the scene. Who would have imagined that with Sha Xuan's swordplay, he could not even fend against his opponent's one stroke?

Xiang Shaolong returned his sword into the scabbard and smiled calmly at Lord Longyang, "Brother Sha's swordplay is too good, I would have liked to hold my attacks back but was unable to, please forgive me."

Inside the horse carriage, Prince Xinling said happily, "Xiang Shaolong has helped me vent my frustration, it feels so good!"

Xiang Shaolong remembered Lord Longyang's pretense of calm as he was leaving and asked with a smile, "I wonder if King Anli will be displeased that I killed his guard."

Prince Xinling gave a cold snort, "That Sha Xuan, on the pretext of exchanging pointers, killed five of my very good swordsmen. Now that you've killed him today, what else can Anli say about?"

By then the carriage has turned into a small road with trees growing densely around it and in front there's a tranquil and exquisite looking house and courtyard.

Prince Xinling is in extremely high spirits, maybe because there's now a chance of assassinating the King of Wei. He

told him warmly, "We're now going to this place that all men in Daliang wish to go, 'Little House by the Lake'. The scenery here is breathtaking but the main reason is its mistress. Miss Ji Yanran not only has the beauty to make a country fall, but her talents astound the world as well. Together with Widow Qing from the state of Qin, they are known as the era's finest pair."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly laughing bitterly. If it was the past, he will certainly be ecstatic to have the chance to meet such a famous beauty, but now his own life is in danger, how can he find the mood to flirt. Even if the other party was willing, he'll have to think of a way to make her give up so that she will not have to worry about his future.

Once he thought about that, he really felt like a tiger that has fallen on bad times.

Prince Xinling has no idea that he is already aware of his evil plot and thought that Xiang Shaolong was just too excited to talk, so he embellished the story, "Miss Yanran loves to chat about scholarly and martial pursuits with the various learned men who came from afar..."

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, "Martial pursuits?"

Prince Xinling was shocked, "I didn't expect you not to know this. Miss Yanran is ranked above Lord Longyang amongst Wei's greatest swordsmen, at number 2. Hai! Such a beauty, how can any average man be compatible with her? That's why she is still unmarried now. Whoever wins her heart, will certainly gain fame in the world immediately and become

the envy of all men around.”

He sighed again, “Talking about looks and skills, Shaolong has the qualities to be selected, but you might not be able to pass the scholarly test.”

As they spoke, the carriage has entered the courtyard.

Under the shade of the trees, a small lake appeared in front of them. In the middle of the lake was a small island with a few exquisite rooms built on it, a long bridge linking the island to the land. It looks like a place fit for a deity to live in.

No matter how dejected Xiang Shaolong was, he was invigorated on seeing it. To think that there would be such a scenic place in Daliang. Looking at the abode one can know the person who resides in it, so by this deduction, this pretty mistress must certainly be out of the ordinary.

The little island on the pretty lake was shaped like a crescent moon, with a fake waterfall, looking like a painted scroll. Between the rooms there were strange flowers and grass, gentle waves lapping and long corridors meandering and linking them, exquisite with an ancient beauty. One can imagine that if one can take a stroll there, it will certainly be a very exhilarated feeling and one will be reluctant to leave.

The carriages went up the long bridge, as if they're now traveling into a beautiful painting, the breeze blowing past the water, the trees fighting for beauty. The colors of the pavilions and rooms stood in contrast with the lake and the mountains, the little bridges and streams partially hidden by the green leaves and trees.

After passing through a bamboo pathway and two small pavilions, the carriages stopped in at an open space in front of a building. There were already three horse carriages parked there, obviously they are not the only visitors.

Xiang Shaolong followed the rest down the carriage and a pretty maid came out from the building and paid her respect to Prince Xinling, saying "Miss is having an afternoon nap now, would Prince Xinling and the rest of the guests please wait a moment in the hall."

Prince Xinling doesn't seem in the least offended and happily led Xiang Shaolong into the hall beneath the building.

Xiang Shaolong was laughing bitterly to himself secretly again. Looking at what the maid is like, he can imagine what the mistress will be like. To think that there is such a great beauty with character, but he does not have the mood or bravery to hunt. Fate does make fun of men.

VOLUME 4

CHAPTER 1

Fierce Beauty

[Translated by JEAN]

JI YANRAN'S abode is made from white stone, hidden amongst the flowers and trees and it's style was ancient and exquisite, like a building in heaven and those staying inside were beautiful fairies.

Walking up the stone steps to the building, inside the door there was an exquisite stand for the guests to put their cloaks and weapons. Two pretty maids were already waiting there to serve them.

Tan Bang went close to Xiang Shaolong's ears and whispered, "Learned lady Ji does not like people to bring swords into her abode."

Xiang Shaolong nodded his head to show his understanding and thought to himself that this Learned lady Ji is really putting on airs. She obviously knows that an esteemed guest like Prince Xinling has arrived but she was still napping and her maids dared not wake her up as well. Furthermore, she refused to let anyone enter with weapons. But he thought about it again and felt that her haughty attitude is well done as well, because truthfully, he has to admit that men are cheap. The more difficult it is to get the woman, the more precious she will be. Even now he is thirsting to find out how truly beautiful she is.

The two pretty maids seems especially taken with Xiang Shaolong as they served him meticulously, carefully dusting off the dirt and dust on his clothes before presenting him.

After all the various work was done, the four entered the hall.

They had just walked past the door when a loud and crisp voice shouted next to Xiang Shaolong, "Esteemed guests have arrived! Esteemed guests have arrived!"

Xiang Shaolong was taken unawares and totally startled. He

looked towards the voice and can't help but laugh, because it's a talking parrot perched on a stand.

The two pretty maids obviously doted on it and they smiled daintily as they fed this interesting animal.

Xiang Shaolong glanced around.

The large hall was elegantly decorated but the most unique part is that there are no rugs, just a few square tables and mats. The hall was filled with strange bonsai, as if they have moved part of the garden outside into here.

On one of the huge walls hung a large painting of a beautiful woman, wearing light and thin clothes, looking quietly elegant, just like the talent and elegance exuded by the mistress here.

Of the group of four tables in the hall, three groups were filled and there were two to six people in each group. All of them talked softly, as if afraid to awaken the mistress from her nap.

Prince Xinling led them and walked into the hall and immediately more than half the people stood up and pay their respects to this second in command in Wei. Obviously it was the first time the rest of the people had seen him, and only when they realized who he is, they hurriedly stood up and paid their respects as well.

With one look Xiang Shaolong took notice of a few of the people.

Especially the group of four nears the window on the left

side. Three of them were dressed in warrior's clothes and have an outstanding aura, but what stirred his notice was the ferocity they exuded. Especially one of the large sized men who is built like a mountain and a little taller than Xiang Shaolong. His limbs were extremely thick, his long hair touching his shoulder, wearing a silver decorative piece on his forehead. His face was wide, his back broad, his eyes large like copper bells with a look of viciousness and slyness. He looks majestic and his whole body exuded an evil and shocking charisma.

The two warriors beside him were both fierce and vicious looking but next to him, they immediately paled in comparison. The strangest thing is the hands of the three of them all bore scars of being burnt by fire.

Another who took his notice was the group of six men on the right, dressed as scholars. One of them was tall with a refined look, the deep eyes shimmering with intellect, looking like an immortal.

There was only two people in the last group, the shorter one with an average look and from his clothes, one can tell that he is not a Wei. One wonders which country he could have come from, but for someone who can come here and see Ji Yanran, he is naturally a person of a certain status.

Prince Xinling first greeted the group of six on the right, and spoke to the refined looking man, "We were just talking about Mister Zou, and did not expect to see you so soon."

He waved at Xiang Shaolong and said, "Shaolong, come over

and meet this extremely gifted man with foresight Mister Zou Yan.”

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, so this is the philosopher who is famed because of his ‘Sayings of the five merits’. He was about to come forward and offer his respects when a loud and thick voice from the left rang out, “Master Wuji, may I ask if this is the Imperial Protector from the state of Zhao, Brother Xiang Shaolong?”

Xiang Shaolong was secretly startled and looked towards the voice. The person who spoke was the warrior who looked like the devil reincarnated.

Obviously Prince Xinling does not recognize this person and asked in surprise, “This gentleman is...”

The Wei who looks like the person who introduced these three warriors here to meet Ji Yanran stepped forward and said respectfully, “Feng Zhisen is a guest under Lord Longyang, pays his respect to Sir. This person whose intellect and bravery is known throughout the state of Qi is Mister Xiao Weimou. The warrior on the right is called Ning Chong, the one on the left is Zheng Lei. They are all famous warriors in Qi and Mister Wei’s personal fighters.”

Prince Xinling and Xiang Shaolong were both equally shocked. They did not expect this ferocious man would chase him so closely. Since he is now openly going after him in Daliang, he must be up to something nefarious. Obviously he is under the protection of Lord Longyang and has the backing of the King of Wei, no wonder he dares to be so

rude here.

Just as Xiang Shaolong feels a huge headache coming on, Xiao Weimou took a huge step forward and after paying his respects to Prince Xinling, turned towards Xiang Shaolong, extended his hand and said, "I've long heard that Brother Xiang's swordsmanship is outstanding, if there's a chance I must exchange pointers with you."

Xiang Shaolong knows that he wants to compete with him on strength and has no choice but to extend his own hand as well.

The corners of Xiao Weimou's mouth curved up into a cold smile as he used his strength to shake his hand. For a moment Xiang Shaolong felt as if his hand has been clasped with an iron manacle that is still being tightened.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly startled. Although he can still manage to fend him off, he still felt the pain in his hands as if the bones are cracking and he knows that his opponent's arm strength is definitely better than his.

Luckily he has a higher tolerance than ordinary men and did not embarrass himself in public. He even managed a smile and said, "Has Mister Wei just had an accident with fire, why do your hands look as if they have been burnt?"

A mad fury flashed past Xiao Weimou's eyes and he increased the pressure in his arms and said icily, "It's just some silly act by some low down person. It's nothing much. Besides, such childish pranks can only last for a moment. Sooner or later I will crush him to pieces."

Such an explosive atmosphere, even Zou Yan and the rest can clearly feel that something unpleasant had happened between the two of them.

Xiang Shaolong bitterly withstood his startling arm strength.

Xiao Weimou had wanted to crush his fingers to pieces immediately so that he will no longer be able to use the sword. But after testing Xiang Shaolong's strength, he knows that he would not be able to achieve his ideal effect, so with a cold laugh, he released his hand and went back.

His two subordinates stared at Xiang Shaolong with deep hatred. Obviously that fire had burned them quite badly.

Prince Xinling signaled to Xiang Shaolong with a look and introduced the Weis next to Zou Yan, who are all famous men or senior officials. Obviously Zou Yan is very popular with the Weis.

After the round of introductions, Prince Xinling's gaze rested on the last group of Weis and said with a smile, "This is the first time I've seen Mister Zhang Fengchang here."

He looked at the person who is of average built next to him, and besides his intelligent eyes, the rest of him looks average and asked, "This gentleman is..."

Zhang Fengchang laughed, "This is Master Han Fei from the state of Han. I'm here all thanks to him today, because Miss Ji was complimenting Master Han's book 'Speaking of Difficulties' after reading it and sent word to say she would like to meet him. Therefore I have to accompany and bring

Master Han here to meet Miss.”

Prince Xinling and the rest were all excited as they did not expect to see such a famed intellectual here. But at the same time they feel a little cheated, as they did not expect this person to look so ordinary.

This famous Han Fei whose name had gone down centuries is not one good at socializing. He just smiled clumsily, bowed slightly and to him it means offering a greeting.

The two pretty maids hurriedly invited Prince Xinling and his men to be seated at a low table opposite Han Fei and his friend.

By then only the table beneath the large painting of the beauty was empty, and this must be where Learned lady Ji will be seated.

Like the others, Xiang Shaolong sat around the table, eating the snacks the maids brought out but his heart is in turmoil.

With the arrival of Xiao Weimou, the situation has become even more complicated.

Besides, this person has amazing arm strength and his body is as solid as steel. Xiang Shaolong may be talented, but he may not be his match as well. If he were to join hands with Lord Longyang, and with Prince Xinling harboring hidden agendas about him, his trip here will really be filled with danger.

As he was thinking, he heard Prince Xinling asking Han Feizi, “Does Master Han have something to attend to during your

trip to our state this time? Please let us know so that I can see if there's any way I can help?"

Hai Fei replied, "This time... Hai! This time I came under the orders of my King, to come... come here and borrow rations."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly startled, he did not expect Han Fei to have a stutter, and his words are not adequate to express his meaning. He doesn't even know how to take the opportunity to speak up for his cause and point out why Wei should lend rations to Han.

Indeed Prince Xinling furrowed his brows and replied, "So that's the case, how much does your country need to borrow?"

Han Fei replied, "10,000 stones!"

And he stopped short at that, not elaborating further.

Naturally Prince Xinling was unperturbed but just smiled and did not converse further.

Zou Yan said loudly, "Downfall comes after the peak, and after downfall comes the peak, the exchange of the five merits. Actually there were signs long ago that the state of Han will suffer from drought. Five years ago I saw a meteor fall into the boundaries of Han, and I said there will certainly be calamity, and now the prediction has come true."

Han Feizi furrowed his brows, obviously unhappy and he did not believe Zou Yan's words at all. But the others around Zou Yan all agreed with him.

Xiao Weimou who is from Qi like Zou Yan, laughed “Mister Zou is indeed far sighted. Now the world is ruled by seven states, would Mister be able to explain where the future will lie and enlighten us?”

Zou Yan smiled slightly and was about to reply when they heard the sounds of adornments clinking and a beauty, with the accompaniment of four maids, walked into the hall from the inside.

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly looked over and he felt his brains go numb from shock.

A beauty who looks like a fairy with supple skin and luminance being escorted out by pretty maids. Like the moon being supported by many stars, walking daintily forward. This scene captivated everyone. Their souls seemed to have gone to heaven.

Her hair was combed into a high bun at the side, which matches her slim body and tiny waist. Her slim neck and fair skin was alluring, their brightness captivating.

Her eyes were deep and dark with reflections like the water. No wonder her beauty is known far and wide, she is absolutely enthralling.

She was wearing a long white robe with flowers, which flitted prettily as she moved. The wide sleeves fluttering, enhancing her beauty and posture. Her alluring outer beauty as well as her captivating inner beauty came together to form a painting of a beauty.

Xiang Shaolong felt as if he's in heaven, and totally forgot about the things happening on earth.

Even with Wu Tingfang's beauty, she pales a little even when compared to her, so apparently she is extremely enchanting.

Ji Yanran walked over prettily and leaned languidly on the tall cushion behind the long table in the middle, looking even more charismatic than ever.

The way she half sat and half leaned back is already alluring. But when she kept her legs up the rug, her skirt moved up to reveal her fair, flawless and supple dainty feet which makes Xiang Shaolong feel like crawling up the rug and pin her underneath so that he can explore her body and inhale her fragrance.

After Ji Yanran seated herself properly, she tilted her pretty head and said with a smile, "Yanran was too fond of sleeping and have made everyone wait so long!"

Xiang Shaolong regained his senses and took a look at the rest. He saw that Prince Xinling, Zou Yan, Han Fei, Xiao Weimou and everyone else looked enchanted; they have even less self-control than him.

Just as everyone hurriedly assured her that it's all right, Ji Yanran's shiny, lively and dark eyes flitted towards Xiang Shaolong and looked at him before flitting over to Xiao Weimou's table, scrutinizing the rest of the people and lastly looked at Han Fei. A look of joy passed over as she exclaimed happily, "Would this be Master Han Fei?"

Xiang Shaolong and Xiao Weimou were both greatly disappointed. Obviously Ji Yanran is more interested in Han Fei than in them.

Han Fei's face blushed red and replied nervously, "I am indeed Han Fei."

Ji Yanran's pretty eyes lighted up as she gushed happily, "After reading Master's grand works, it indeed has views that no one else has thought of before. I am extremely awed."

Xiang Shaolong felt extremely disappointed, this Han Fei's appearance has no attraction at all yet Ji Yanran is looking at him differently. Obviously this woman is more concerned about a person's intellect. When it comes to compositions or debates, if he compares himself to Han Fei, it would be like the comparison between a kindergarten student and a Nobel Prize winner. But he feels a little relieved as well, because he has problems preserving his own life now. So no matter how alluring Ji Yanran is, he will have to curb his desire to court her or he may not be able to handle it all.

With a beauty praising him, Han Fei is at a loss as to what to do, and doesn't even know where to put his hands.

Ji Yanran seems to have eyes only for Han Fei, and she said gently, "Mister's philosophy about governing a country with 'law', 'techniques' and 'power', suggesting that people acts with one thing in mind which is to achieve gains while avoiding punishment, so the law must come into play if anyone commits any unwanted actions. It indeed looks right

into the problem and is food for thought.”

Han Fei was at a greater loss for words and can only keep nodded his head, which makes others feel bad for him.

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that if he can transplant his knowledge into his own brain, he might be able to enjoy the company of a beauty tonight.

Zou Yan laughed loudly, and after Ji Yaran and everyone else’s attention was diverted to him, said confidently, “With Master Han’s knowledge, your King will certainly appreciate it greatly. But why is it that there seems to be no improvement in your country’s cause to take over the world?”

Xiang Shaolong secretly cursed. Zou Yan was too much to rub salt on Han Fei’s wounds like that.

A look of anger and embarrassment flashed through Han Fei’s face but he was unable to speak further.

Obviously Ji Yanran admires Han Fei for his talent so she helped him out by saying, “An intelligent man needs a good master as well. Shang Yang, who is a Wei, did not accomplish anything in Wei as well. But when he went to Qin, his reforms improved the state greatly. Does Mister Zou think that I have spoken rightly?”

Xiang Shaolong secretly complimented her retort, this lady is indeed remarkable. Just as he thought Zou Yan would be speechless, Zou Yan smiled slightly and said, “Of course Miss’s words are very reasonable, but the point is not about

the intellect of an individual. Besides an individual, there is still fate at work. Shang Yang was successful because of the situation, and he could not escape from the control of the five virtues. Only one who truly understands the five elements: Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth and how they interact with each other will be able to grasp the changes of luck determined by Heaven.”

Han Fei gave a cold snort, and his words came out a little smoother as he said, “What Mister Zou said... said... is unconvincing. Then.... then are we supposed to... sit and wait for fate, and don’t have to do anything else?”

His words sound reasonable as well, but the way he stuttered them out, it just doesn’t sound as convincing.

Zou Yan is a good debater and he chortled, “Of course that’s not the case. Once we can grasp Heaven’s plans, we will be able to foretell the future and know the aim and direction where we should work on. Let’s say digging a well for example, only when we know where the source of water is we start digging. So we will not waste our efforts in vain.”

Han Fei was so furious his face turned red but he could not find a retort, or maybe he doesn’t know how to express it. Xiang Shaolong felt great pity for him and wished that he can find some paper and brush so that he can write down his opinions.

Applause was heard. It turned out to be Xiao Weimou clapping in agreement.

Ji Yanran looked towards Xiao Weimou and raised her brow,

asking, "This gentleman is..."

Xiao Weimou puffed out his chest, like an animal looking for a mate and said loudly, "I am Xiao Weimou from the state of Qi. I wonder if Miss has heard of me?"

Ji Yanran was enlightened, "So it's Mister Wei who advocates learning from beasts. May I ask, if men and beasts are the same, won't the world be thrown immediately into chaos?"

Now that Xiao Weimou has a chance to show off his knowledge in front of this beauty, how can he give up this chance so easily, so he smiled and said, "Miss has lived mostly in the city, naturally you would not understand the world of animals. The wilderness has been my teacher for many years and I have observed the lives of beasts and birds and have concluded that only if we go with nature's flow will we not betray Heaven's decree. We can enjoy the life given to us under the greater law of nature. If we were to try and suppress our nature, it will only cause more harm than good and will make one become a hypocrite whose thoughts are not in conjunction with one's actions."

Ji Yanran looked at him with concentration, her expression showing that she's thinking about his words. Xiang Shaolong secretly thought oh no. this beauty is obviously very curious about things and very easily attracted by new and unique theories. If Xiao Weimou was to possess her, he would feel the pain and unfairness of it, so he can't help but blurt out, "How can man and beasts be the same? Even different

animals have different ways of living.”

Xiao Weimou laughed coldly, “They can live differently, but their nature remains the same.”

Naturally Xiang Shaolong will not show any courtesy towards him so he stared at him and said smilingly, “The difference between man and animals is that we are not restricted by our innate abilities and desires. We can even sacrifice our own precious lives for the greater good. Animals walk on all fours, but we can stand up and because we need not use our hands to walk, they’ve become nimble and can make things like this house and all other necessities. Do animals have that ability?”

Obviously Xiao Weimou has done some research on this question so he mocked in reply, “You’re talking about abilities, not innate nature. Birds can fly but can humans fly? Fishes can live underwater but can humans live underwater?”

Xiang Shaolong is definitely not a philosopher, but now that he’s spoken, he cannot back down and have to forge his way through, “I am talking about innate ability. Because human brains are different from animals, we can think and reflect. Besides food, clothing and lodging, we also need mental stimulation. But for animals everything is about survival, they sleep after eating and mate when the time is right. Animals in nature are at a loss and can only react but man can fight against nature and defeat nature. That’s because man has a different innate nature. We know how to improve

and expand, that's how we are now above animals."

Xiang Shaolong's not very excellent argument is widely known in the 21st century. But for the people in this era, it's a new idea and this made Ji Yanran immediately change her opinion of him.

Obviously Xiao Weimou has never thought of this question and he replied angrily, "What's the difference? I've seen both animal and human brains. They're all just made of tissues and flesh!"

Xiang Shaolong chortled, "You have just spoken about the greatest difference between humans and animals. Would animals analyze the difference between their brains and human brains?"

For a moment Xiao Weimou was dumbstruck, fury flared in his eyes and he wished he could tear Xiang Shaolong alive.

Although Zou Yan does not agree with Xiao Weimou's wild theory that humans should emulate animals, but they're both from the State of Qi and he does want to put Xiao Weimou down in front of Ji Yanran. Therefore, he tried to pick a bone from an egg and retorted, "Brother Xiang earlier said that the difference between humans and animals is that we can stand up, then gorillas and monkeys all can stand and walk, how do you explain that?"

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, and thought to himself that he can't possibly explain to them about evolution. Luckily his mind worked quickly and he had an idea, "The difference is in the construction of the brain."

He touched his forehead and said, "Primates do not have forehead like us, so they can only concentrate on immediate matters and won't think about tomorrow. But we can arrange and plan for tomorrow's matters, or even plan for matters a year or ten years from now."

In truth Xiang Shaolong's thoughts and arguments are already in a mess, but everyone knows that gorillas really do not have foreheads, so they all thought his reasoning logical.

Ji Yanran clapped and chuckled daintily, "How exciting, I've not heard such an interesting debate like this for a long time."

Her pretty eyes flitted towards Xiang Shaolong and she asked with a sweet smile, "This gentleman here, please forgive Yanran for not knowing who you are yet!"

Xiang Shaolong was stunned and secretly lamented. He could not tolerate it further earlier and thus came up with a nonsensical debate, and he hopes that she has not really taken a liking for him.

CHAPTER 2
Chu Mohism's Fu Du
[Translated by JEAN]

JI YANRAN asked about Xiang Shaolong's background and Prince Xinling hurriedly replied, "This is the number one swordsman from the state of Zhao, Xiang Shaolong. Remember that, Yanran."

Ji Yanran looked at Xiang Shaolong with a smile before turning her attention back to Han Fei. Although Xiang Shaolong breathed a sigh of relief, knowing that she has not 'taken a liking' to him, he can't help but also feel dejected, as if hurt. What a dilemma.

Tan Bang went closer to Xiang Shaolong and whispered, "This is Ji Yanran's rule, only she can ask a person's name and status. I've been here more than 20 times but she has never asked who I am. Shaolong, you've already left an impression on her."

Xiang Shaolong felt a man's pride surging up. He thought to himself that since he is not wooing her, why does he have to react to her moods but on seeing her only talking and laughing with Han Fei while the rest can only look on, he felt a sudden fury. Of course he felt a little left out and jealous as well so he stood up.

Prince Xinling was stunned, "Shaolong! What are you doing?"

Ji Yanran turned around and looked at him; a flash of light seems to pass her pretty eyes. Obviously she only realized his perfect physique and outstanding aura now.

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be candid and said with a laugh, "Miss Ji is indeed a born beauty. It is my fortune to meet you, farewell!"

Ji Yanran was a little startled then she seemed to understand his thinking and said with a slight smile, "How many days will Mister Xiang are staying in Daliang?"

Xiang Shaolong saw that she has no intention of making him stay at all and was secretly furious and felt a great loss of face but he pretended to be nonchalant and said simply, "Maybe a few more days!"

Prince Xinling and the rest had no choice but to stand up and leave with him.

On the way back to Xinling's residence, Prince Xinling ranted in the carriage, "Shaolong do you know what a good opportunity you've missed? It's rare that Ji Yanran is all smiles. For all you know she may play the zither and sing for the guests! Hai!"

His words carry a great regret, obviously Ji Yanran's singing and zither skills is extraordinary.

But what Xiang Shaolong is thinking of is the vicious look Xiao Weimou gave him when he left. This person is not one who has only brawns but no brains, and he has many capable men under him. He is indeed in a very dangerous position now.

After returning to Prince Xinling's residence, he went to Lady Ya and she immediately pulled him into the room and said, "I've made contact with Wu Zhuo and Cheng Xu and told them your instructions. Wu Zhuo wants me to tell you: He doesn't know if their spies in Daliang have been embroiled in Prince Xinling and Lord Longyang's fights because of this matter. So they have been in hiding and refused to make contact with him. Now we can only rely on ourselves. He also said he'll try to find a way to sneak into the city."

On hearing this Xiang Shaolong's mood turned for the worse and he collapsed on Lady Ya's rugs.

Lady Ya came up and helped remove his shoes, saying gently, "Ya'er has found the entrance to the underground

tunnel, how are you going to reward me?"

Xiang Shaolong sat up in joy and pulled her into her arms. After giving her a good kiss on the lips, he said, "Lady is really capable!"

Lady Ya happily nibbled on his ears before telling him in detail the entrance to the tunnel. She sighed and continued, "Stealing 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual' may not be difficult, but the difficult part is leaving the state of Wei and avoiding the pursuing soldiers. 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual' is such an important item, Prince Xinling will surely check on it daily and once he find it gone, he'll naturally think that we're the ones who took it."

Xiang Shaolong also felt this to be a headache.

Right at this time Prince Xinling sent someone to summon him over immediately.

The guard led him to the inner hall which he had overheard Prince Xinling and his sister's conversation the other night, and after they were all seated, Prince Xinling said seriously, "Anli has given his imperial edict. He wants you to send Zhao Qian into the Palace the day after. That night he will throw a feast to welcome you as the ambassador."

Xiang Shaolong felt a lurking in his heart. He knows the crucial time is about to come.

Prince Xinling lowered his voice, "Lord Longyang will use the excuse to exchange pointers about swordplay to kill you. The person who will fight will certainly be that Xiao Weimou. In

that way Anli and Lord Longyang need not be responsible because Xiao Weimou is a guest from the state of Qi."

Xiang Shaolong secretly lamented, if it's a proper duel with Xiao Weimou, chances of him winning are really slim. Just based on arm strength alone, he's already on the losing end.

Prince Xinling said quietly, "Lord Longyang hates you to the core right now. He's definitely not going to let you leave Daliang alive. And because he has the backing of the King, I'm afraid even I cannot protect you. Shaolong do you have any plans?"

Xiang Shaolong was secretly cursing Prince Xinling but he sighed and said, "What can I do? I can only take one step at a time."

Prince Xinling sized him up for a moment before taking a deep breath and said, "If Shaolong wants to avoid the calamity and at the same time enjoy endless riches, there is only one way. Do you want to know?"

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, "it is coming!" But he pretended to be attracted and said, "Please advice!"

Prince Xinling said, "It is to kill Anli that useless King and Lord Longyang."

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be shocked and exclaimed, "What?"

Prince Xinling said coldly, "A man must be vicious at times, since he's merciless, I need not show any kindness. I have men around Anli as well and we can hide the weapons in the

Palace. As soon as you kill Anli, my men can immediately take out the weapons and kill Lord Longyang and the rest. When I ascend the throne, and with your great help, we'll take the opportunity when Qin is powerless to invade east to unify the three states. By then won't the world be ours? You can kill Zhao Mu for revenge as well, or else it'll be a dead end for you when you return to Zhao anyway."

The future he painted is indeed very attractive but Xiang Shaolong knows they're all lies. He nodded his head, "This truly is the only way, but King Anli will certainly have personal bodyguards and I cannot carry my weapon openly, how can I kill him?"

Prince Xinling saw that he did not object at all, his eyes gleamed with excitement as he said, "I had planned to hide a dagger under your table, but it's not that appropriate. Now that I guessed that Xiao Weimou will challenge you during the feast, then after you defeat Xiao Weimou, while accepting Anli's congratulations, you can surprise and kill him. You can also create some chaos with your swordplay and we'll have the chance to strike. At the same time my men will attack the Palace and we need not worry the plan will fail."

Xiang Shaolong thought what if I'm killed by Xiao Weimou instead? He had an idea, if he doesn't take this chance to gain more advantages, he'd be a fool. So he said with a straight face, "As long as I have nothing to worry, Shaolong will give his life to you and try my best."

Prince Xinling furrowed his brow, "What do you mean by nothing to worry?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "It's Lady Ya and Zhao Qian, if they can leave Daliang, I will not have to worry and can do what needs to be done."

This is called blackmail. Of course he knows Prince Xinling cannot let Zhao Qian go but he's not afraid of letting Lady Ya leave because the day after, whether the assassination is successful or not, he can still instruct his men to get Lady Ya back.

As expected Prince Xinling said, "Zhao Qian can never leave, because you have to send her to the Palace. As for Lady Ya? Since Shaolong has this request, I will certainly do my best."

Xiang Shaolong was relieved of half his load and said, "The King is not going to let Zhao Qian become the Crown Princess at all. Then why is he still inviting her into the Palace?"

Prince Xinling sighed, "Shaolong you're too naive. Anli can easily let Zhao Qian die mysteriously, then announce to the world that she died of illness and send her body back to Zhao. The King of Zhao will not be able to do anything to him. This may be too extreme, but it's the best plan Anli can come up with as a last resort."

Xiang Shaolong felt his whole body run cold on hearing this, which increased his determination to save the beauty.

Prince Xinling said, "As soon as you kill Anli, won't all

problems be solved?"

Xiang Shaolong shook his head, "That's just the way I am, I do not wish implicate others in whatever I do. If Zhao Ya and Zhao Qian are not around, I will take responsibility for everything that I do, even if I fail and get captured I will not betray you. But once I think that I may implicate them, I'm afraid I will not find the courage to strike, then that'll be terrible."

There's nothing Prince Xinling can do to him and he suppressed his anger and nodded his head, "Let me think about this, there surely will be a solution."

When Xiang Shaolong heard him say this, he was secretly overjoyed. He remembered that Wu Zhuo mentioned he will be trying to sneak into the city, so he said, "In order not to let Anli become suspicious, I'd better not coop myself up in your residence these few days. I should walk around outside, then all the more Anli will not be on guard against me."

Prince Xinling furrowed his brows, "How can you do that? Lord Longyang will find someone to deal with you."

Xiang Shaolong laughed, "He's not that stupid. After seeing how easily I killed Sha Xuan, and now that Xiao Weimou is helping him, can't he wait another two days? I'm also doing this for you, hoping that the plan can succeed more easily."

Because Prince Xinling needs his help, he does not want to go against his request too much so he sighed and said, "What other requests do you have? I've just received a few dancers from Chu who are excellent dancers and singers. Let

me send two of them for your enjoyment!”

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that it's still an unknown whether he can stay alive, where can he find the mood to have fun with beauties? He said seriously, “I should not be going near women these two days so that I can maintain my best stamina. Hei! If I can kill Anli, even if you do not offer me beauties, I'll ask you for them anyway!”

A teasing look flashed past Prince Xinling's eyes as he chortled, “If the plan succeeds, there's no problem even if you want the Empress or Princesses of Wei to accompany you.”

The two of them exchanged looks, and both laughed, each harboring their own motives.

Xiang Shaolong left Prince Xinling's inner residence and walked towards Lady Ya's Flying Clouds Chamber. And as he was passing by the woods, a maid hurriedly brushed past him and stuffed something into his hands. Xiang Shaolong was still in a state of surprise as he took the thing when the maid increased her speed and darted into the woods. Because she kept her head lowered, he didn't even manage to catch a good look at her.

Xiang Shaolong opened his hand, it turns out to be a nicely folded little handkerchief and when he opened it, a delicate map was drawn on it with a few tiny words at the side which read, “Waiting for gentleman at the Windy Bridge, meeting

from Shen Mou⁵ hour. Ji Yanran.”

Xiang Shaolong was feeling perplexed and taking a closer look at the map, it shows the direction to that Windy Bridge from Prince Xinling’s residence.

Ha! This woman really spared a lot of thought into this, to actually use such a method to date him. Obviously because she does not want others to know. He didn’t expect her to put up such a haughty and proud front, but in fact she is also thirsting for men.

His heart immediately started burning, but he remembered his dangerous situation now and sighed. He sat down in a small pavilion in the garden, contemplating whether to go for the appointment.

Footsteps were heard and a guard rushed over and said, “Master invites Sir over!”

Xiang Shaolong was surprised and followed the guard back into the inner hall to see Prince Xinling.

Prince Xinling exclaimed happily, “Shaolong is really capable, Yanran just sent someone over with a verbal message and invited you and me to her abode tonight at the Mou⁶ hour to continue with the debate we had today. Obviously she has a very good impression of you, later I will tell someone to send you there!”

Xiang Shaolong was startled and secretly thought what a

⁵ Shen Mou
time between 3pm to 7pm

⁶ Mou = time between 5pm to 7pm

close shave. So that handkerchief earlier was a trap, this is the real thing. He was really careless to have almost been duped, mainly because he was too confident about his charm and he can't help but feel shame and guilt.

Prince Xinling saw that he has a strange expression and asked surprisingly, "Is Shaolong unhappy? Everyone in Daliang finds it an honor if they can attend Yanran's banquet."

Xiang Shaolong was just pondering who could be the one who wants to harm him and he answered with a bitter smile, "I'd better not go, in case I get distracted."

Prince Xinling laughed, "Don't be so nervous, and don't think that Yanran will fall for you so easily. Your theory was interesting today, that's why her interest was a little piqued! If you don't go it will arouse the suspicions of others instead."

Xiang Shaolong sighed, "You mentioned earlier that you'll tell someone to send me there, are you not going as well?"

Prince Xinling sighed, "She invited me only because it's basic courtesy to do so, but her target is you. Go! If you miss Yanran's banquet, even I will think it's a great loss to you!"

Actually Xiang Shaolong really wants to meet this unique beauty again and his departure today was due to a man's ego. Since now Prince Xinling is encouraging him, he made up his mind and said, "I can go on my own, and at the same time I can take a walk around as well."

Prince Xinling agreed with a smile.

When Xiang Shaolong returned to Flying Clouds Chamber, Zhao Qian and Zhao Ya were chatting and when they saw him return, naturally they were full of smiles and overjoyed.

He saw that Zhao Qian was around and dared not reveal the conversation he had with Prince Xinling earlier, afraid that he would scare this weak princess.

Lady Ya seems to understand and said with a smile, "Come! Princess! Let us serve Xiang Lang while he bathe!"

Although Zhao Qian doesn't mind being cozy with Xiang Shaolong, or even let him paw her, but she has never tried being naked with him. She blushed immediately and ran away.

Lady Ya then pulled him towards the bath.

While Xiang Shaolong was frolicking with the beauty in the water, he told her about Prince Xinling's plan for him to assassinate the King of Wei.

Lady Ya felt her body turn cold, even though Xiao Zhao and the rest of the maids kept pouring in hot water, it did not help. She exclaimed in alarm, "The day after is so soon! What shall we do?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "We definitely cannot proceed with the plan to assassinate the King of Wei. No matter if it succeeds or not, I will not be able to live, so the only way out now is to find out how to steal 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual' and then run away from this place safely with the whole

group.”

Lady Ya looked dejected, “That’s easy for you to say, this place is where the Weis are at their strongest. Both the King of Wei and Prince Xinling has the city heavily guarded so how can we escape when each step of the way is fraught with difficulties?”

Xiang Shaolong held her tightly and sniffed her face before replying, “Don’t worry! Prince Xinling made a show of pretense and said he will let you and Cheng Xu leave, because if not I will refuse to execute his assassination plot. The question is how can you avoid his pursuit, and we must also consider that he might hide things from me and secretly escort all of you to somewhere else.”

Lady Ya burrowed her head into his arms and said, “He’ll definitely do that. Besides how can I bear to leave you? We’ll die together if need be.”

Xiang Shaolong replied, “This time it’s my turn to disallow you to utter the word ‘die’, trust me!”

He paused and continued, “Ya’er is an expert at stealing information and this time you’re here especially to steal ‘Lu Gong’s Secret Manual. I’m sure you had something planned out!”

Lady Ya replied, “Of course I made plans! I just didn’t expect this to be a trap! I followed the scroll that Guo Zhong obtained which shows the drawings of how the cloud ladder is made and with that, made a silk scroll. As long as we can steal the real ‘Secret Manual’, Xiao Zhao, the maids and I,

the eight of us working together, I'm confident we'll be able to copy a large portion of the scroll and make it look authentic. If Prince Xinling were to flip only a section of the scroll when he's checking it, he'll definitely not find out that we've done something to it. But we need at least 10 days."

Xiang Shaolong had a bright idea, "Since that is the case, why don't you use just one night, make a rough copy of one section of the scroll and cut the rest of it out and replace it with blank copies, then it'll be even better to trick Prince Xinling with."

Lady Ya hugged him happily and kissed him. She complimented him with a sigh, "Ya'er is so silly, I didn't even think of such a good idea."

But her mood immediately turned sullen, "But how can we leave Wei? If Prince Xinling keeps you and Qian'er behind, there's no use even if we manage to escape successfully."

Xiang Shaolong replied, "Heaven will always leave a way out for man, we will certainly find a good plan to achieve both ends."

Lady Ya's pretty eyes shone, "Heaven will always leave a way out for man, achieve both ends. Xiang Lang's words are always so interesting and sound good as well. Ya'er really loves you!"

Xiang Shaolong said, "Now let me see if I can bump into Wu Zhuo. This person is smart and brave and familiar with the situation in Wei as well. He'll certainly think of an appropriate plan. I will be attending Ji Yanran's feast tonight,

but I will slip back secretly. Now tell me quickly the entrance to the secret tunnel.”

After the two of them discussed the finer details, Xiang Shaolong prepared himself and left.

He had just stepped out of Prince Xinling’s residence into the street when a person rushed over and asked, “Does Commander remember me?”

Xiang Shaolong looked over in surprise and felt that this person looks familiar. He took a while to remember he is Pu Bu, one of the famed family warriors under Prince Shaoyuan, who is on the same status as Xu Hai, the one he killed. He cried out happily, “So it’s Brother Pu Bu.”

Pu Bu pulled him into a restaurant and after sitting down, said quietly, “Most of us have given up on Prince Shaoyuan, and we do not wish to live amongst the conniving and unreliable Weis. We hope to follow Commander and do great things.”

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows, “But I’m having problems preserving my own life now. Both Zhao and Wei are not the place for me, if you follow me, I’m afraid you might even lose your lives.”

Pu Bu replied, “There’s 48 of us, we’re all brave men who are not afraid of death. We have thought over the various problems before making up our minds to follow Commander. Just looking at how Commander cares so much for our well-being, we’ll be willing to work hard for Commander. With your capability, you will achieve

something great sooner or later, please accept us!”

Xiang Shaolong had an idea, “Aren’t you living in Prince Xinling’s residence?”

Pu Bu replied, “A group of us is staying in the residence with Prince Shaoyuan, while the rest is staying in a mercenary house nearby for the time being. We’re just waiting for Commander’s instructions now.”

Xiang Shaolong has learnt his lesson and thought to himself that he cannot be so trusting of this person for now. After they agreed on how they could contact each other, he asked, “Are all of you from Zhao?”

Pu Bu shook his head, “We have people from everywhere. Please, don’t worry! We truly respect your character and military abilities and have no other intentions.”

Xiang Shaolong replied, “All right! Go back to the mercenary house first and wait for my commands.”

Pu Bu left happily.

He had just stepped out when Wu Zhuo took over his seat.

Xiang Shaolong was overjoyed and hurriedly discussed with Wu Zhuo the plans secretly.

After he parted with Wu Zhuo, the sun was still up. He saw that it’s still early so he might as well follow the map’s instructions and go to that Windy Bridge. The bridge is indeed as the name suggests, with cold wind blowing past it. Not a lot of people crossed the bridge and those who did

were all in a hurry.

There are forests at the two ends of the bridge, with very few houses around. It's very quiet and secluded, an ideal place to kill someone.

Reasonably Lord Longyang and Xiao Weimou won't go an extra step to lay a trap to kill him. His other enemy Prince Shaoyuan won't be so dumb as to spoil his uncle's grand plan, so who could be the one who tried to lure him here?

Once he thought about this, he was very curious and since the enemy is not here yet, he hid under the bridge first. Using the steel hooks, he tied himself securely beneath the bridge so that even if someone were to check under the bridge, they won't notice his presence so easily.

Xiang Shaolong waited patiently and when the time for the appointment arrived, light footsteps could be heard on the bridge, as if his enemy is not wearing any shoes.

Xiang Shaolong thought that it's really a close shave, if he really thought that the beauty had asked him out, he will definitely be in trouble now.

Someone above called out, "Juzi! I'm afraid Xiang Shaolong won't be coming, we didn't even see any trace of him while on the way here."

Xiang Shaolong who was beneath the bridge was startled, could it be that the leader of Zhao Mohism, Yan Ping is here?

A rough voice replied, "How could that lad have seen through our trap? That's really strange!"

Xiang Shaolong could tell that it's not Yan Ping's voice and felt even more troubled, the group above would either be from 'Qi Mohism' or 'Chu Mohism'. He did not expect their news to be so accurate and guessed that the Juzi Token is with him. Trouble really comes one after another.

The person earlier asked, "Juzi! What should we do now?"

That Juzi laughed coldly, "Does he think that we can't find him as long as he hides in Prince Xinling's residence? Others may be afraid of Prince Xinling but would I, Fu Du, be afraid of him?"

His subordinate asked quietly, "I heard that he will be attending the King of Wei's feast the day after. Lord Longyang and Xiao Weimou will definitely not let him off. So if we want to strike, there's only tonight and tomorrow night."

Fu Du was silent for a moment before replying slowly, "We still need to prepare, so let's strike tomorrow night! If possible, we might as well kill Prince Xinling as well so that when our Great Chu deals with the Weis in future, it'll be easier."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly glad he came and overheard this big plot, and at the same time found out that the other party is from Chu Mohism. He can't help but sincerely thank Heavens.

The other party must have a spy, so they would know the situation in Prince Xinling's residence and the defense strength. Even so they actually have the audacity to enter

the residence to kill and plunder. So obviously they are quite strong. But since he is aware of the other party's plot now, this would turn out entirely differently.

CHAPTER 3

Debating Heroes

[Translated by JEAN]

WHEN Xiang Shaolong arrived at Ji Yanran's little house by the lake, there were already 10 odd elaborate horse carriages outside the door. The attendance a lot larger than this afternoon's.

After he gave his name to the guard, he saw one of the maids he met this morning coming out to welcome him and led him past the building which he met Ji Yanran this afternoon. She was carrying a lantern as she led the way and went through a small path in the woods. His eyes suddenly

brightened, in large building with a lot of colorful lanterns hanging on it appeared in front, and he seems to hear people talking in it.

Xiang Shaolong can't help but ask the pretty maid, "Which other guests are here tonight?"

The pretty maid replied nonchalantly, "The guests tonight are all specially invited by Miss. Besides Master Han Fei, Zou Yan and Xiao Weimou whom Mister Xiang has seen today, there's also Lord Longyang, Philosopher Xu Jie and General Bai Gui."

Xiang Shaolong sucked in his breath. This Ji Yanran is really something. Bai Gui is the person that Lady Pingyuan is remarrying, so naturally he's someone great. While Lord Longyang is a favorite of the King of Wei and yet they all came for the event. Obviously her position in Wei is extremely elevated as well. Although he doesn't know who that Xu Jie is, he must be someone famous as well.

He was perplexed as well. Lord Longyang should not be interested in women, if he's not here because of Ji Yanran's beauty, what else can he be here for? Could it be to humiliate him to appease his anger?

When it comes to learning, he won't be able to catch up with these scholars even if he's chasing them on a horse. So to ask him to speak is akin to embarrassing him on the spot. Therefore, he can't help but feel uneasy.

When he stepped into the hall, he saw the table lay-out and all the others the maid talked about were already here. All

sitting back on the soft rugs and sitting comfortably around the table.

Another two pretty maids came forward and helped him remove his outer cloak and shoes. Luckily it is winter now and he's wearing a thick cotton outfit so unless one reaches out to touch him, they won't realize his equipment hidden in his clothes.

Stoves were lit in the room, making it as warm as spring.

Lord Longyang is still behaving 'languidly' and even proactively introduced him to the others.

That Bai Gui is the oldest, at least 50 years old but very robust with gleaming eyes, giving others an impression that he is very smart. And he behaved haughtily towards Xiang Shaolong, only giving him a cold acknowledgement before turning towards Philosopher Xu Jie who looks like a typical scholar and spoke quietly to each other privately.

Xiang Shaolong was seated between Hai Fei and Zou Yan, the seat beside Han Fei is still empty, obviously it's Ji Yanran's main seat, followed by Lord Longyang, Bai Gui, Xu Jie and Xiao Weimou.

Xiang Shaolong saw that he need not sit opposite Xiao Weimou and face him so he felt a little more comfortable.

Zou Yan behaved quite coldly towards Xiang Shaolong and only gave a brief greeting before talking to Xiao Weimou, who is from Qi like him, totally ignoring Xiang Shaolong.

Instead it was Han Fei who took a liking to Xiang Shaolong

because of his help this afternoon and although he is not a very good talker, it still gave Xiang Shaolong a little warmth in this 'icy atmosphere'.

Ji Yanran only appeared now, wearing a white brocade robe and absolutely glowing, immediately capturing the attention of everyone. Even that Lord Longyang was no exception, he looked dumbfounded and Xiao Weimou was almost drooling while Han Fei blushed. Although their reactions were all different, they were all attracted by her.

Ji Yanran looked at everyone with a smile, her clear and languid eyes flitted around and even Xiang Shaolong felt as if his soul had been enchanted. Her body emitted a fragrance after her bath, giving rise to other thoughts.

She had just sat down when she said with a smile, "Mister Xiang will have to be punished with a drink first. How can you leave before the end of the meeting this afternoon?"

Everyone immediately followed her wishes and agreed.

Naturally at this point in time there'll be pretty maids pouring wine and serving delicious food.

After Xiang Shaolong gladly exchanged a toast with her, Ji Yanran's enchanting eyes flitted around the dining table and chatted cleverly, making everyone at the feast feel at home. However, she seems to be more interested in Han Fei, Zou Yan and Philosopher Xu Jie, talking and smiling to them more, and not paying much attention to the rivals Xiang Shaolong and Xiao Weimou.

The truth is Xiang Shaolong has absolutely no clue about their conversation regarding poetries and song, and there's no way he can interrupt to show off even if he wanted to.

After they've eaten and drank, and with the urging of everyone, Ji Yanran ordered her flute to be brought out and played a tune for all.

Xiang Shaolong doesn't know the tune she played but he does know that her skills with the flute is flawless and at the peak and can't help but be drawn into the music like the rest of them, totally intoxicated by the melody.

After Ji Yanran finished her tune and everyone sincerely complimented her, she smiled and asked Xiao Weimou, "Mister Xiao please forgive Yanran for being rude, but I would like to boldly ask you a question."

Maybe Xiao Weimou has been affected by the atmosphere, or maybe he's trying to get into Ji Yanran's good books and fain her affection so his speech is a lot more refined and said gently, "As long as it's Miss who asks it, I will be most glad to answer any question of yours."

Ji Yanran smiled enchantingly and said, "The difference between humans and beasts is whether they have a sense of shame, what does Mister think?"

Everyone knows that the show is about to begin and stopped eating and drinking, quietly listening to their conversation.

Before Xiang Shaolong came he thought that Ji Yanran had

changed her mind about him but now that he saw she is treating him so coldly, he was about to find an excuse to slip back and steal the 'Secret Manual' so that Lady Ya and the eight maids can make a copy. Therefore he was not really concentrating on their conversation.

Obviously Xiao Weimou came well prepared and said with a smile, "I'm afraid Miss has misunderstood my meaning. I do not mean there's no difference between man and beasts at all, it's just that some innate nature, like the desire to live and procreate, is the same! That's why there are many things worth learning from animals. For example, animals will not lie. They're more honest than us. Man should be true to their own nature before they can really enjoy life."

He continued with a cold snort towards Xiang Shaolong, "What insight does Brother Xiang has about my theory?"

Xiang Shaolong was thinking about Chu Mohism's Fu Du at that time so when he heard the words he was startled and said, "What? Oh! I don't have any views on that."

Everyone, including Ji Yanran, was immediately stunned and revealed looks of contempt.

Xiang Shaolong was laughing bitterly to himself that he's not a debater so even if he has heard what he said, he won't be able to argue well. Luckily he has decided not to woo Ji Yanran, so it's no big deal if he loses favor with her or not.

Philosopher Xu Jie looked at Xiang Shaolong scornfully before saying, "There's a big problem with Mister Xiao's words. The difference between man and beasts lies exactly

in their innate nature. Man are kind by nature that's why they show kindness to others; beasts, in order to fill their stomachs, have no such compassion and will willfully kill and eat other animals, sometimes even their own kinds are not let off. If man were to be so bad as to learn from beasts, won't the world be thrown into chaos?"

Xiao Weimou is an unrefined man and now that this scholar in Confucianism is butting into his theory, he felt a loss of face and asked coldly, "Will man not kill other animals? What is Philosopher Xu eating now then?"

Xu Jie laughed, "This is exactly the difference between those bloodthirsty beasts and us. We only eat domesticated animals. Will beasts know how to do this?"

Xiao Weimou is obviously not his match and for a moment was dumbfounded.

Xu Jie won in his first attack and was filled with pride in front of Ji Yanran, so he turned his attack towards Han Fei, "I have read Master Han's great works as well and the theories are interesting. A pity that you committed the same mistake as your Teacher Xun Kuang, which is to think that men are evil by nature. That's why they do not know the great meaning of changing the people with benevolent policies. They use punishments to rule the country and bully the people. With Master's abilities, to think that you were actually misled into following the wrong path, it's really a pity."

Hai Fei was stunned for a moment as he did not expect Xu Jie to be so rude as to criticize him so disrespectfully. He is

furious and could think of the retorts to make but the more angry he is, the worse is his stutter and he was unable to speak at all.

Lord Longyang, Bai Gui and Zou Yan all have an icy smile on their faces, 'happily' watching him being humiliated.

Ji Yanran raised her delicate brows and although she felt bad for Han Fei, she was impatient about his inability to speak as well.

Xiang Shaolong, as an outsider, suddenly understood the meaning behind Ji Yanran's hosting of this dinner tonight; which is to find a good way to govern a country. That's why she looked at Han Fei in a different light and also invited the important people in Wei so that they can accept new theories and ideals.

Xu Jie saw that Han Fei was unable to defend himself at all and became even more proud and insolent, saying "As for you who denied the methods of the previous Kings, it shows that you are forgetting your roots. It's just like building a house, we must first have a good foundation. Without a foundation, the house will not be able to withstand the weather, and this foundation is the models left behind by our learned ancestors."

These words are targeting at Han Fei's theory that there is no such thing as unchanging policies in governing a country. Han Fei feels that protecting the old ways is not proactive at all, so one should not follow old ways blindly but act appropriately according to different situations at different

times. Such thinking is of course more advanced than those Confucians who advocates protecting the old ways, but a pity Han Fei is not eloquent enough to say it out.

Xiang Shaolong saw that Han Fei was so furious his vein was almost bursting. He couldn't bear the sight and blurted out, "Nonsense!"

He'd just spoken out when he realized he's in trouble. Indeed everyone's attention turned towards him, and Xu Jie looked at him impertinently and said with a cold laugh, "It turns out that besides leading soldiers to war, Commander Xiang has some insight about governing a country as well. I am willing to listen to your lofty ideals."

Xiang Shaolong can feel Ji Yanran's pretty eyes staring at him, and thought to himself how can he possibly lose face in front of this beauty, so he forged ahead, "Time moves forward, for example in the past wars were fought mainly with war carriages but now it's fought with a mixture of steeds, foot soldiers and carriages. So obviously blindly relying on old ways will not work out."

Ji Yanran sighed disappointedly, "Mister Xiang seems to be a little unclear about Philosopher Xu's point. What he is referring to is principles, not methods. It's just like a war is a still war, just different ways of fighting it."

Lord Longyang smiled coquettishly, "Brother Xiang, your swordplay may be excellent but it seems that you have not studied a lot. Now we're debating with Master Han the difference between governing by 'virtue' and by 'legalism'!"

Xu Jie said loudly, "Governing by virtue, you will be like the North Star, staying in its place while other stars move around you."

He paused and recited again, "People who are governed legalistically and controlled by punishment will avoid crime but have no sense of shame. People who are governed through virtue and controlled through propriety will have a sense of shame and correct themselves."

These are famous Confucianism sayings, meaning that the way to govern a country is to use virtue as a foundation so that the people can be educated and the country peaceful. It has a totally different basis from legalism.

Xiang Shaolong was not interested and felt that it's better he find an opportunity to slip away soon. All this talk about governing with virtues, he's not even clear about the theories behind it. It will better that he leave early to avoid embarrassment to himself so he stood up and offered his farewells.

Everyone was shocked. They did not expect that the debate has not even properly started and this person is already running away.

Ji Yanran looked at him unhappily, "If Mister Xiang is going to slip away after just saying a few words like you did this afternoon, Yanran will be very unhappy."

Lord Longyang has not made enough 'fun' of him yet, so how can he bear to let him leave. He also spoke up to make him stay.

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that he can't be bothered if Ji Yanran is happy or not because to her. He's just an unimportant guest whose presence will not be missed. He was about to leave when he realized that Han Fei was tugging at his sleeve seriously so his heart softened and he sat down.

Ji Yanran exclaimed happily, "Now that is how a man should be. Mister Xiang seems to be deliberately holding back your opinions. Yanran really wants to hear your theories!"

Xiang Shaolong laughed bitterly to himself, thinking that Miss Ji really thought too highly of him. Compared to the rest, he's just a bumpkin, where can he find theories to expound.

Xu Jie has been on the upper hand the whole night and secretly thought that he may be able to gain the liking of the beauty, so he will not let go of the chance to show off. He forced an attack and said, "In Mister Xiang's opinion, which is better, governing by virtues or legalism?"

Xiang Shaolong saw the look of contempt in his eyes and was furious. He decided to forge ahead and said, "It's not a question of better or worse, but a question of whether it works or not. Governing by virtue is purely idealism, if everyone in the world is a saint and there are no evil men, then everyone will obey the law without the use of any methods. But the truth is, the situation is obviously not like that, and it will never become a fact, that's why we need a set of laws and guidelines that everyone is aware of to

restrict everyone and make them obey. Only after this is achieved can we talk about virtues and respect. That's all I have to say."

Everyone was shocked. To someone from the 21st century, this is a logic that everyone understands, but for people in that era, this is even more in-depth and refreshing than Han Fei's theory of legalism.

Ji Yanran's pretty eyes lighted up and she scrutinized Xiang Shaolong afresh, chewing on his words.

Han Fei looked deep in thought, unconsciously nodding his head.

Zou Yan was silent, as if he's thinking of some questions.

Naturally Xu Jie would not admit defeat so easily but he no longer belittles his opponent and he said with a straight face, "If a country is governed only by law, won't the person in power be able to suppress and bully the weaker ones with punishment?"

Bai Gui commented, "If the government loves propriety, the people will not dare to be disrespectful; if the government loves righteousness, the people will not dare not to follow them; if the government loves trust, the people will respond with their emotions. This is the way a ruler should govern. If one were to prefer punishment, what would the people become? Mister Xiang, please enlighten us."

Xiang Shaolong chortled and after taking a long look at Ji Yanran, turned towards Bai Gui and Xu Jie and said, "That's

just because legalism is not thorough enough. To put the power solely in the hands of the ruler! If everyone is equal in front of the law, the son of heaven... heh.... The ruler who commits a mistake will face the same punishment as commoners. For example, if anyone who kills someone without a reason will be punished, who would dare to kill randomly? I did not say we should discard propriety and righteousness. These should be the basic principle behind any law. The true way to govern a country is to combine governing by virtue and legalism. Absolute power will only result in absolute disintegration.”

When he talked about ‘the ruler will face the same punishment as commoners’, Ji Yanran went ‘Ah’ while Han Fei’s eyes immediately brightened. The others, including Xiao Weimou, all revealed looks of shock and alarm. Especially the last few words, is like a morning bell sounding, resonating deeply in everyone’s heart.

For the people living in this era where the rulers are supreme, this is indeed a mind shattering theory.

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that that’s all the argument he can muster out, if he says some more there’s bound to be mistakes so he stood up and said, “I have already revealed all my worthless thoughts. Hei! I still have something important to do, farewell!”

Ji Yanran furrowed her brows and said angrily, “Mister has just told us the most interesting part and you are leaving? Do you dislike Ji Yanran?”

Zou Yan forcefully dragged him back to his seat and laughed, "Commander Xiang has piqued my interest in talking! I would like to ask how such legalism which includes the ruler as well should work?"

Lord Longyang said, "Brother Xiang's theory on governing a country is even more ideal than the governing by virtues which we talked about!"

Xiao Weimou laughed icily, "And more impractical as well!"

Xiang Shaolong smiled bitterly, "Yes! It will not work now but if we work towards this direction, one day there will be a situation where power is divided into 3, the legal system, law enforcers and government. The ruler will be chosen by the people and only then will there be... hei... French... ai! No, real live, equality and freedom."

He almost wanted to blurt out about the French Revolution but luckily he caught himself in time and swallowed his words.

These words were even more earth shattering and everyone could not digest the information at once. For people who have been living such a long time under the absolute rule of the kings, this is such an unacceptable thought yet at the same time extremely exciting and refreshing.

Xiang Shaolong saw that everyone was furrowing their brows and thought what a better time to leave than this. He stood up and immediately walked far away from the table before bowing and saying, "I was speaking nonsense, please don't take it to heart."

He turned around and left, ignoring Ji Yanran's calls.

CHAPTER 4
Stealing The Sky And Exchanging The Sun
[Translated by JEAN]

WHEN Xiang Shaolong returned to Prince Xinling's residence, Ji Yanran's calls seems to be still ringing in his ears.

When every guest of hers is trying all means hoping to stay, he is the complete opposite, running away as if afraid that she will entwine him.

But this woman is indeed unique, when he first heard of her talent and beauty, he thought that she would be the melancholy type like Lin Daiyu, or those haughty beauties

who keeps an arm's length away from everyone else. Only after he's seen her did he realize she's filled with a passion for life, always seeking facts, thirsting for a learned person to find out a good way to govern a country, or maybe to seek the perfect husband in her heart.

But that person will certainly not be Xiang Shaolong.

For him now, he has no time and neither is it appropriate for him to start any relationship with any woman. He has to conserve all his energy to protect and save Lady Ya, Zhao Qian, the maids and the others, that is his responsibility. If he becomes distracted because of another beauty and made a mistake, he'll certainly regret it for the rest of his life.

He may be a flirt by nature but he has a strong sense of responsibility as well. Besides, he's deeply in love with them.

Making use of the light that was streaming out from the building; he made a big round and using his equipment, climbed up the dangerously sloping back mountain which was behind Prince Xinling's residence. He then easily slipped into the residence and from the description he got, came to the top of a tree next to a building.

This courtyard belongs to Prince Xinling's inner quarters so security is very tight. Occasionally fierce looking guard dogs can be seen patrolling with groups of men. Luckily he has sprinkled on him the powder that Lady Ya brought with her or else he would not be able to escape from these animals' sensitive noses.

Now it's almost 11pm at night. Lights can still be seen in the

building and he wondered who is not yet asleep.

According to Lady Ya this should be where Prince Xinling's family resides in. So if there's someone down there, it'll be difficult for him to sneak into the secret tunnel quietly.

After waiting impatiently for more than half an hour, he could not take it anymore and decided to take the risk, because he does not have the time to continue waiting any longer.

He lifted up the treasure in his hand and activated the switch. The hook flew out three feet across and landed lightly on the roof, hooking it tightly.

He then slid over like a flying bird and landed quietly on the roof. He found a sure footing and flipped over the roof down to the balcony on the second level, which was covered by bamboo, moved to the window and looked into the room.

It was an elaborately decorated room. Besides the curtains hanging lowly on the low bed, there was a dressing table and copper mirror and things usually found in a ladie's room. The lamp was brightly lit and from the bed the moans and pants of a man and woman coupling could be heard.

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that since this is the entrance to the secret tunnel, the person staying here must be someone Prince Xinling trusts, maybe his beloved wife or concubines. If Prince Xinling wants accompaniment during the night, he can always summon the woman here and there's no need for him to 'travel' here. Could it be that his wife or concubine is having an affair?

But there is no need to think further. Just as he was about to flip one level down, he heard voices from down below. A group of patrol guards were downstairs and they actually stopped and were quietly talking.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly lamenting and after waiting for a while, those people downstairs still have no intention of leaving. He gritted his teeth, drew out a flying needle and poked it through the gap in the window, lightly flipping up the latch on the window. He pushed open the window and flipped into the room.

A gust of wind followed him into the room.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly alarmed and before he had a chance to close the window, a man's voice was heard from inside the curtained bed, "Zhichun you must have forgotten to close the window properly, look! That window is opened!"

The voice sounds familiar, it's actually Prince Shaoyuan.

The woman called Zhichun replied in surprise, "That's impossible, let me go and close it, the weather is really cold!"

Xiang Shaolong was startled. This room may be big but there's no place to hide. The low bed is not higher than a foot and he can't squeeze under it even if he wanted to. In his anxiety he had an idea. He rolled towards the candle, reached out his hand and extinguished the flame by pressing on the wick.

That Zhichun had just sat up and exclaimed with an 'Ah', saying, "The wind has extinguished the candle!"

Xiang Shaolong dared not hesitate and rushed towards the door and tested it with a push. It opened immediately and he was overjoyed. Using the sounds of Zhichun moving around as a cover, he dashed out and closed the door.

It's an empty hall outside with a flight of stairs down, and there are two other rooms.

The sound of the door opening was heard behind him and Xiang Shaolong was startled. He rushed forward and managed to hide behind a screen in time.

At this time a totally naked beauty came out from the room. She looks younger than 20 and looked delicate with fair skin and a voluptuous body, extremely captivating. When she walked her bosom bounced which made her even more alluring.

Zhichun walked towards the screen coyly.

Xiang Shaolong was alarmed and only now did he realize that at his feet there were chamber pots and such, used for relieving oneself and he hurriedly dashed out from the other side of the screen and lied flat on the ground so that the candle will not reflect his shadow. Right at this time Zhichun stepped behind the screen but he exited just as she entered so she did not manage to see him.

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought what a close shave and crawled towards the stairs. When he heard twinkling sounds

behind the screen, he went down.

Just as he reached the corner of the stairs, voices were heard from below, there were at least four men talking.

Xiang Shaolong stood at the corner stunned and lamented his luck. If he can't manage to steal the 'Secret Manual' tonight, it'll be even worse.

He turned around the corner and stuck his head out to look down towards the hall and saw four warriors sitting around a table chatting. If he were to walk down, no matter how careful he is, there's no way he can avoid them. He was so nervous his heart almost stopped.

In his anxiety, he heard Zhichun's crisp voice call out, "Is there anyone still around?"

Someone replied and walked towards the stairs.

Xiang Shaolong secretly groaned. He's really stuck in the middle now with no way to advance or retreat, so he hardened his heart and pulled out a flying needle. His concentration wholly on the warrior who is walking towards the stairs and at the same time squeezed himself into the corner of the wall so that the other party won't be able to see him from afar.

The person replied as he walked, "What instruction does Lady has?"

Xiang Shaolong realized that Zhichun is actually one of the two concubines he brought with him from Zhao.

That warrior came to the stairs and came face to face with Xiang Shaolong and he cried out, "Ah!"

It turned out to be the other expert family warrior who is of the same status as Pu Bu, Liu Chao.

Xiang Shaolong was about to throw out his flying needle but hurriedly stopped when he saw it was him.

Zhichun's voice called out, "Liu Chao! What's the matter?"

Liu Chao collected his thoughts and after exchanging a look with Xiang Shaolong, replied, "Nothing! I just happen to see a rat scurry past and was surprised."

Women are most afraid of small animals like these and Zhichun is no exception so she called out, "Prince is hungry and Xiaoying and the rest are already asleep. Can I trouble you to go to the kitchen and get them to prepare some food?"

After saying this she ran back into the room as if she's running for her life.

Liu Chao came up and whispered, "We were just talking about Commander. Why is Commander here? is there anyway we can help?"

Xiang Shaolong made up his mind and told him about stealing the 'Secret Manual'.

Liu Chao saw that Xiang Shaolong puts so much trust in him and replied happily, "Commander please wait for a moment!"

He went back and after informing the other three warriors, he asked Xiang Shaolong to come out.

Xiang Shaolong instructed one of them to go to the kitchen and order some food then he searched the hall carefully first, followed by the rooms. He found the secret entrance to the tunnel under a rug.

Liu Chao said, "Commander, put your mind at ease and go down! We'll keep a look out for you!"

Xiang Shaolong had an idea, "It's best that you go down with me, if there's a need you can put it back in its original position."

Liu Chao gladly agreed and together they grabbed the copper rings and lifted up the stone slab and after walking down 10 odd flights of stone steps, came to the secret tunnel. One side of the tunnel leads towards Prince Xinling's inner hall while the other end leads to the back of the mountain. Obviously it's a secret tunnel that can give safe passage to escape from Prince Xinling's residence because no one will expect that there will be an escape route at that dangerous mountain.

Liu Chao took a lantern and after illuminating the tunnel, the two of them walked towards the direction of Prince Xinling's bedroom.

When they came to another set of stone stairs which led up, Xiang Shaolong stopped and carefully scrutinized and knocked on the walls of the tunnel and realized that there's something different about one of the walls.

The two of them tried pushing but the wall did not move at all.

Xiang Shaolong had an idea, and started inspecting each brick and realized that one of them is slightly protruding. He tried pulling it with his strength and the brick came out immediately, revealing the keyhole inside.

The two of them were overjoyed and Xiang Shaolong took out his tools for picking locks and following Lady Ya's instructions, opened the lock in no time at all.

When they pushed open the door and under the illumination from the lantern, the both of them were stunned. It turned out to be a treasure trove.

In the large underground stone room there were more than 10 chests of jewelry and money. They opened two of the chests and under the reflection of the lamp, the jade pieces, gold and silver all glittered and blinded.

Xiang Shaolong said quietly, "Don't let the other three know about this until we have a plan to leave Daliang, then we'll take a few pieces for our traveling expenses. Remember you must not have thoughts of greed. Men have died for wealth and we could even lose our lives."

Liu Chao is indeed a heroic man and after this reminder, he replied sincerely, "Well spoken, Commander! I understand."

At the same time he felt growing respect for Xiang Shaolong as a person who is not easily moved by money.

Xiang Shaolong searched quickly and after some time he

managed to find an even more secluded secret compartment at the corner of the wall and took out a rectangular metal box. He opened it, and indeed it is the 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual' which was tightly wrapped in cloth that will prevent it from rot or moisture.

He unrolled the scroll for a look and was relieved, because the silk on the drawings were so old it's turned yellow and it's more than 30 meters long. It's so thick and heavy that even if he's Prince Xinling, he won't be bothered to check the scroll from start to end every time. Therefore his plan is sure to work.

He took a closer look and saw that was full of drawings of various tools for attack and defense, with detailed instructions on materials used, the quantity needed and the process of making it. It's indeed breathtaking.

There's not much time left so the two of them left hurriedly. When Xiang Shaolong woke up, Lady Ya and the eight maids were still hard at work. The sun is not yet up.

Lady Ya has already bounded the fake scroll with a section of the real scroll, and used some minerals and colorings to stain the sides of the scroll yellow. It looked so authentic; no wonder she's an expert in duplication.

Xiang Shaolong only had to work under the cover of night and take the 'Secret Manual' which only has the authentic front section, and easily slip it back into the secret room. This should be a very difficult task but because of Liu Chao's help, it became an easy job.

When he returned to Lady Ya's place, the sky is slowly brightening. Lady Ya and the rest were exhausted and were resting on the bed.

Xiang Shaolong hugged her and slept for a while until Prince Xinling sent someone to look for him. He hurriedly washed up and left.

Prince Xinling seems like he had not slept the whole night. Maybe he's trying to pretend to be on close terms because he received him in the side hall of the inner chambers. After they were seated he laughed and said, "Because of your matter, I did not sleep the whole of last night and I finally found an appropriate arrangement."

Right at this time a pretty maid came in to serve tea and Prince Xinling ordered, "I have things to discuss with Commander, no one is allowed to step in here!"

The pretty maid acknowledged the order and left.

Prince Xinling asked in passing, "Did you manage to stir the interest of Yanran last night? I heard Lord Longyang and Xiao Weimou went to the feast as well."

Xiang Shaolong sighed, "Don't talk about it! There's no way I can butt in a word at such a gathering!"

Prince Xinling disagreed, "That's not true. Your ideas are very creative, even Tan Bang admires you!"

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, what's the use of admiring me when you're still sacrificing me as a stepping-stone towards your success.

Prince Xinling saw that he was quiet and asked, "Has Shaolong taken breakfast?"

Xiang Shaolong rubbed his stomach and shook his head.

Prince Xinling cried out, "Attendants!"

Then he slapped his own forehead and sighed, "I'm really muddleheaded. I just chased everyone away. You sit here for a while. I'll go and instruct someone to bring breakfast."

He stood up and left.

Xiang Shaolong was overjoyed and jumped up, firstly aiming towards that inner room, the one that looks like an office that was filled with scrolls and such. At the side there is a side door and outside there is a huge open-aired well and behind the well there is a place, which looks like a pool for bathing.

There's not much time so he pushed open the side door and indeed it is Prince Xinling's bedroom. He took a hurried look so naturally he cannot find the entrance to the underground tunnel.

He walked forward hurriedly and lifted up the rug on the bed for a look. The entrance to the secret tunnel appeared before him. The strange thing is that there is a copper pipe poking out from the ground towards the bed, and the other end is a dragon's head made of copper, looking like an exquisite design on the head of the bed.

Xiang Shaolong immediately felt cold sweat and hurriedly returned to the hall. Prince Xinling came back right at this

time and was smiling, "Breakfast will be served shortly, come! Let me tell you my plan!"

But what Xiang Shaolong was thinking about was that copper pipe. It's obviously a listening device for the tunnel and the secret chamber. Noises from in there will travel through the pipe to Prince Xinling's bed and the design was intricate. Luckily he did not sleep last night, that's why he did not hear him moving around.

Prince Xinling said, "I will order someone to fake a document and will send it to his Majesty today to let Zhao Ya and the rest of the entourage return to Zhao, leaving only you and Zhao Qian. Zhao Ya is my invited guest, so Lord Longyang has no right to object."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, you can say all you want now, with your power, letting them go is an easy task. At the same time he knows that the fact is he will not let a single person leave, but he's just putting on a show. He pretended to be ecstatic, "That's really great, but can we let them leave earlier?"

Prince Xinling first revealed a look of difficulty before saying, "If I can't even do such a small thing, Shaolong will surely belittle me. All right! I will arrange for Lady Ya and the rest to leave the city this afternoon and meet up with your troops before departing immediately. Shaolong need not worry."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly laughing to himself as he asked, "How do we solve Zhao Qian's problem then?"

Prince Xinling replied, "I will send someone to impersonate

as her so that you can send her to the palace, then I'll find a secret place to hide her. I, Prince Xinling, vow to Heaven that regardless if the plan fails or succeeds, I will send her safely back to Zhao unharmed."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought him formidable, as this would mean he has a hostage in his hands and need not fear Xiang Shaolong not following his instructions. Even if he fails and is captured, he would not dare to reveal the mastermind. He has indeed thought of everything.

Breakfast arrived.

As Prince Xinling watched him eat, he asked with a smile, "Is Shaolong pleased with these arrangements?"

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be extremely grateful, "Very pleased, I will certainly not let you down!"

Prince Xinling looked as if he's already succeeded and laughed heartily. He saw that Xiang Shaolong has no objections to him holding Zhao Qian and thought that he trusts him implicitly, so his suspicions towards Xiang Shaolong totally disseminated.

Just as the both of them are thinking their own thoughts, a servant came to report that Ji Yanran has come to look for Xiang Shaolong.

The two of them were equally stunned. That Ji Yanran would come personally to a man's place to look for him, this is indeed the strangest thing that can happen in the world.

A strong look of jealousy radiated from Prince Xinling's eyes

and he tried to cover it up with a dry cough and said, "Shaolong you better go and see her! For all you know she's taken a liking to you!"

However Xiang Shaolong was furrowing his brows instead. He has a lot of things to be done today and they are all important matters regarding life and death. No matter how attractive Ji Yanran is, he cannot waste time on her.

As he was thinking, he followed the servant to the hall in the outer chambers.

Ji Yanran was wearing a white fur cape, standing quietly and delicately in front of a large window looking at the beautiful scenery of the woods outside. She did not even have a maid with her.

There was no one else in the hall but all the back doors and side doors were filled with guards and maids who were squeezing there to steal a look at her. Obviously her attraction is akin to a superstar in the entertainment industry in the 21st century. Luckily there's no such thing as autographs in this era, or else her pretty hands will have to be kept busy.

Xiang Shaolong came up behind her and said quietly, "Miss Ji!"

Ji Yanran turned around prettily and smiled sweetly at him, "Can you spare some time?"

Looking at her smiling face, Xiang Shaolong does not have the heart to reject her, so he nodded, "If it's just a while,

there's no problem."

When Ji Yanran heard that it's only a while, she stared at him with sadness and anger before saying quietly, "Then follow me!"

And walked towards the main door.

Xiang Shaolong was feeling perplexed, where is this beauty going to take him?

The horse carriage left Prince Xinling's residence by the main door and rode towards the east. Xiang Shaolong stole a look at her pretty side view, devoid of all cosmetics, radiating with the glow of youth. Her dainty body was fragrant, extremely captivating.

Ji Yanran suddenly said, "Absolute power will only result in absolute disintegration. This is the first time Yanran has heard such intelligent words that goes straight to the point. Mister is really brave. After you left last night, everyone, including Yanran, lost the mood to talk. Yanran has not slept the whole night, and kept on thinking about every word that Mister has said, and thinking of how confident you look when you said these words."

Xiang Shaolong secretly lamented that he didn't mean for things to turn out like this. There is no time to talk to her about love and relationships.

Ji Yanran's face turned cold and she asked, "Why did Mister Xiang come with Prince Xinling to see Yanran?"

Xiang Shaolong very much wanted to say this is Prince

Xinling's arrangement and he's got nothing to do with it. But how can he bear to hurt this great beauty so he sighed, "Does Miss Ji ask this question to all your guests who come due to your fame?"

Ji Yanran sighed quietly and said gently, "Mister Xiang is the first person that Yanran wants to ask this question to. Tell me truthfully, do I make you irritated, that's why you're always in such a hurry to leave and now you're thinking of how to leave this carriage?"

She rolled her eyes at him and continued, "I've never seen someone as unfathomable as you, keeping all your words inside you and only revealing some knowledge only when forced to the wall. How Yanran wish we can talk into the night, letting our words flow freely!"

Xiang Shaolong was relieved to see that she has not fallen in love with him, but just curious and would like to find out more about his ideas. Of course, if he were to launch an attack now and recite a few theories from the 21st century to make her happy, he may very well be able to get her heart. He can only lament that he has the intention but not the ability to carry this out, for he has to quickly make contact with Wu Zhuo and Pu Bu to arrange the urgent task of escaping from Daliang.

The carriage stopped.

Xiang Shaolong looked out the window in surprise. They have come to an empty space in the woods and there was no one around at all.

Ji Yanran extended her fair hands and lightly pushed his shoulder, a look of excitement in her eyes as she said, "If you don't find Yanran too irritating, then please get off the carriage!"

Xiang Shaolong was all the more perplexed, what has finding her an irritant got to do with leaving the carriage?

Due to her urging, he went down the carriage in a daze.

Ji Yanran told the burly man who drives the carriage, "Go somewhere far away; you can only come back an hour later."

After the man obeyed his orders, Ji Yanran removed her white fur coat, revealing the warrior's outfit underneath. For a moment Xiang Shaolong's eyes shone, looking dumbfounded at the outline of her body and her imposing air.

Ji Yanran drew the sword at her waist and said with a coy smile, "Xiang Shaolong! I am here on his Majesty's order to kill you, get ready!"

Xiang Shaolong was shocked, "Miss must be joking!"

Ji Yanran's face was icy, her eyes sharp and she humphed daintily, "Who is joking with you? Look out!"

Xiang Shaolong saw a flash of sword in front of him and dared not hesitate so he pulled his sword out as well. With a 'dang', he blocked this beauty's forceful attack. He can feel that his opponent's attack is strong and she does not lose out to men in arm strength at all but what shocked him

further is that his opponent's sword seems to have stuck to his which made it difficult for him to execute his sword moves.

Ji Yanran seems to have transformed into a female leopard, or like a ghost has possessed her as she quickly retreated. Her waist seems to be made of spring as she moved about, making full use of the strength in her waist and wrist. Her sword attacks were like the River Jiang, attacking every gap available.

Xiang Shaolong was furious and executed the Mozi swordplay, defending himself. After blocking more than 10 attacks, he finally found a chance to counterattack and his sword sliced towards the tip of his opponent's sword.

Naturally Ji Yanran's arm strength is not as good as Xiang Shaolong, and she was only relying on her excellent swordplay so that Xiang Shaolong cannot execute his moves even if he has the strength to. Now that her opponent has struck her head on, she hurriedly retreated.

Ji Yanran smiled coyly, "Finally willing to reveal your real capabilities?"

Xiang Shaolong has wasted his strength trying to fend off her initial flurry of attacks and although he can say he lost because he was caught unawares, but the main reason is that his opponent's swordplay is indeed excellent, even better than Lian Jin. At this point in time he dared not give way to her as he blocked his chest with his sword, the angle, strength used and timing made it difficult for her to attack.

Ji Yanran's eyes shone and in an instant she moved her body diagonally and her long sword pierced up from the bottom, coming in contact with Flying Rainbow.

Xiang Shaolong almost lost his grasp on his precious sword and in his shock he moved diagonally away.

Ji Yanran easily moved back into the offensive and launched another flurry of lightning fast attacks so that her opponent does not even have time to catch a breath.

Only now does Xiang Shaolong truly experience why she can be number two in swordplay in Wei. She is indeed better than him but this is only in terms of swordplay. His advantage is that every part of his body is a formidable weapon so if he wants to stay alive this time, he will have no choice but to use unorthodox moves. As he blocked off the attacks using Mozi swordplay's defensive ability, he was secretly scrutinizing his surroundings as well, looking to see if there's any way he can change defeat into victory.

The more Ji Yanran fought the stronger she became. Every move full of energy, frightening yet so alluring and a delight to see.

At this time Xiang Shaolong kept retreating, he felt his back knock against a large tree.

Ji Yanran laughed as her long sword struck towards him.

Xiang Shaolong moved his sword up diagonally to block it.

'Dang!'

And Xiang Shaolong's Flying Rainbow flew out of his hand.

Ji Yanran was momentarily stunned because it was obvious Xiang Shaolong loosened his grip deliberately and allowed her to strike the sword aside. Because she was using all her strength, her body fell forward from the momentum.

'Bang!'

Ji Yanran's shoulder was struck by Xiang Shaolong's flying kick and she fell forward due to the intense pain, collapsing onto the soft grass.

Ji Yanran was about to turn over and use the strength in her waist to rebound when Xiang Shaolong leapt over and pressed down on her alluring body. His two hands grabbing her wrists like metal manacles and she was immediately immobilized.

Xiang Shaolong grinned as he lowered his head, looking into her eyes with only a three inch distance between them, "You do not concede?"

Ji Yanran's body totally relaxed and she loosened her grip on her sword, her pretty face blushing and pouted prettily as she replied gently, "Why would Yanran not concede?"

Xiang Shaolong's face turned serious, "Then how are you going to account to your King?"

Their limbs intertwined, the intoxicating feeling coming so strong towards them but instead they have their opposing situation. Xiang Shaolong found it really difficult to describe such feelings.

Ji Yanran totally gave up trying to fight back as she laid on the ground limply. She blinked her huge and pretty eyes, "What account? Yanran does not understand what Mister Xiang is talking about?"

Xiang Shaolong saw the look of sincere joy in her face and slowly understood. He stood up angrily, "So you were lying to me."

Ji Yanran pouted, "Aren't you going to help me up?"

Xiang Shaolong was so furious he almost wanted to ignore her. But finally he could not find the heart to be so cruel towards this beauty so he extended his hand and pulled her up.

Ji Yanran bowed and said, "Please don't blame Yanran? If I don't do this, how can I test your wondrous... heh, wondrous leg skill. That area is still in pain!"

Xiang Shaolong shook his head as he smiled bitterly and he walked over to pick up his flying rainbow and after returning it to its sheath, turned and walked away.

On the way back in the horse carriage, Ji Yanran looked totally ecstatic and self satisfied and kept on stealing peeks at the simmering Xiang Shaolong and said gently, "Xiang Shaolong you look so good when you're angry!"

Xiang Shaolong was fuming and he stared at her angrily, "I did not expect that talented Learned lady Ji would lies as well, and be so good at it too."

Ji Yanran rolled her pretty eyes at him and said, "Aren't you

wondering why I would want to test your swordplay?"

Xiang Shaolong leaned back on the chair, crossed his leg and made a show of nonchalance as he said with a chortle, "You're trying to see if I'm suited enough to be your future husband, right?"

Ji Yanran covered her mouth in surprise, "You're only half right, because things have not reached that stage yet. Besides you only barely passed!"

She guffawed and continued with a laugh, "Until today, you're the first who passed the first round. If you're really serious in wooing me, I can try my best to give you chances."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that this woman is indeed funny and he furrowed his brow, "Love is a strange and wondrous feeling between a man and a woman; and comes naturally. It's not a series of tests like what you're doing."

Ji Yanran's eyes shone with an indescribable brightness as she said with a smile, "Very well said, better than anyone else. That's why Yanran knows that you have a reason for pretending not to like me. However the way you looked at me revealed the secret in your heart. Especially when you were pressing down on me on the grass earlier. I am even more certain of your feelings towards me."

Xiang Shaolong secretly felt guilty and was dumbfounded. He can only stare at her dumbly.

Ji Yanran asked happily, "So do you want to go back to Prince Xinling's residence, or to Yanran's little house by the

lake?”

Xiang Shaolong seems to be startled awake and was secretly cursing himself for being bewitched by her and cried out, “Turn left quickly!”

Ji Yanran gave the orders and before they reached the main door of Prince Xinling’s residence, they turned into another street.

Xiang Shaolong said, “Please stop at the junction in front. I am getting down.”

After Ji Yanran gave the orders, she asked sadly, “Mister Xiang, do you really not feel any longing for Yanran at all?”

Xiang Shaolong felt a wave of sadness and after a sigh. He went close to her ears and whispered, “Miss is the most alluring beauty I have ever met in my life. However the timing is too inappropriate and very soon Miss will understand my difficulties. Forget me! All right?”

He hardened his heart and left the carriage.

He was standing on the street when Ji Yanran lifted the curtain and called out, “Mister Xiang!”

Xiang Shaolong secretly sighed and moved towards the window.

Ji Yanran looked at him deeply, intelligence reflected in her pretty eyes and she said serenely and gently, “Yanran understands now. If there’s any problem, remember that Yanran will help you at all costs.”

CHAPTER 5
Bloody Battle On The Long Street
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG met up with Wu Zhuo at an abandoned old house. This extremely reliable battle friend who went through life and death with him said, "We've already followed your instructions and dug a tunnel from beneath our camp to lead to a forest behind the camp. We've also sent men to use that tunnel and make more than 10 wooden rafts in the forest and kept them hidden next to a small river that leads to the main canal. If we follow the flow of the water, we will be able to reach the southern border of the state of Qi in two days."

Xiang Shaolong replied happily, "Lady Ya and the rest will return to camp this evening. Tell Cheng Xu to put on an act and insist on traveling only tomorrow. In that way Prince Xinling won't be on his guard against us."

Wu Zhuo furrowed his brows, "Then how are you going to get out of the city? Prince Xinling will certainly send men to keep an eye on you."

Xiang Shaolong said, "I definitely cannot leave, or else no one will be able to escape. To use that tunnel to let everyone leave, we'll need at least two hours. You will start immediately after the sun sets and make some fake men as cover ups. All armors, horses and heavy items will have to be left behind. Try to purchase some horses from the traders after we reach Qi and if you travel by night, you'll definitely be able to return to Zhao safely. In summary success will depend on being secretive, just pretend that you're horse thieves."

Wu Zhuo's expression changed, "What about Grand Young Master-in-law. If I abandon you, Master will certainly take my life! At least I want to stay behind and accompany you."

Xiang Shaolong replied sternly, "This is an order, you must follow my instructions. Without you, Cheng Xu will definitely not be able to accomplish anything."

He continued gently and consoled him, "I will definitely treasure my own life and I have a detailed plan as well. I'll be able to save myself and take Zhao Qian away as well."

Wu Zhuo still shook his head.

Xiang Shaolong sighed and revealed to him the whole plan.

Wu Zhuo was silent after listening to it before saying, "If Grand Young Master-in-law does not return to Zhao within three months, I will kill myself to replay your kindness."

Xiang Shaolong was both touched and helpless and after discussing further some details, they parted. He managed to find Fu Bu through a series of intricate communication methods. And after some secret discussion, he went back to Prince Xinling's residence.

Prince Xinling dragged him to lunch and after the meal Xiang Shaolong returned to Flying Clouds Chamber to see Lady Ya.

Lady Ya has already received notification from Prince Xinling and has already packed. When she saw him return, she ran into his arms and cried bitterly, "Without you, Ya'er will not leave!"

Xiang Shaolong thought this to be a headache and after trying to cajole and scare her, he was finally forced to reveal his whole plan to her. Lady Ya knows that this is the only way they can survive so she had no choice but to tearfully agree.

It's time to depart.

On Zhao Qian's side, she and her three maids were hugging each other and crying bitterly, as if they are about to be parted by death, making all who witness it feel sad as well.

It was only under Xiang Shaolong's constant urging that the two maids Cui Tong and Cui Lü went on their way tearfully.

Prince Xinling escorted them out of the city personally and when they reached the camp, Cheng Xu followed Xiang Shaolong's instructions and insisted on traveling only the next day.

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be helpless and exchanged a look with Prince Xinling, finally accepting Cheng Xu's suggestion.

Prince Xinling smiled, "Don't worry! I've specially transferred a team of light cavalry to escort them on their way tomorrow morning."

Xiang Shaolong had long noticed the Wei army camp nearby and looking at the scale knows that there is at least 2000 men there. He was laughing secretly to himself as he returned to the city with Prince Xinling.

They were riding next to each other as Prince Xinling commented, "From now on, it's best that Shaolong stays in the residence. Firstly to conserve your energy and also to prevent any other accidents from happening that can spoil the grand plan. I've already sent men to send Zhao Qian to hide at a secret location so that Shaolong need not have any worries when you attend the feast tomorrow."

On hearing that Xiang Shaolong felt as if his heart has dropped into a bottomless pit. If Zhao Qian has really been kept by him, won't he be totally under the control of this fiend? But he still pretended to be grateful on the surface.

Heavens! What should he do next?

Prince Xinling asked nonchalantly, "Why did Yanran look for you this morning?"

Xiang Shaolong was thinking at this point that if Prince Xinling finds out tomorrow morning that Lady Ya and the rest have all slipped away, he will certainly suspect his sincerity, then how would he deal with him and Zhao Qian? He forced out a smile and said, "I don't know why she's looking for me too, she was talking to me about everything and left after a while."

Prince Xinling thought to himself that as long as she has not taken a liking to him, it's all right, and he stopped talking further.

Xiang Shaolong was in an extremely bad mood and returned listlessly to Prince Xinling's residence. When he returned to his room, he got rid of the four pretty maids. Just as he was feeling edgy and nervous, there was a 'plonk', and a piece of cloth wrapped around a stone was thrown in.

Xiang Shaolong removed the cloth and it turned out to be a message from Liu Chao, generally informing him that Prince Xinling has increased the number of men to keep an eye on Xiang Shaolong, so he dared not come and meet with him. Zhao Qian has been brought to Lady Pingyuan's residence and was being held there and they will keep a close eye on her. At the bottom of the cloth he drew a simple map, pointing out the buildings where Lady Pingyuan resides in.

Xiang Shaolong immediately heaved a sigh of relief. As long as he knows that Zhao Qian is still within the residence,

there is still hope.

At the same time he guessed that Prince Xinling is up to no good and will still get Lady Pingyuan to send Zhao Qian into the Palace instead of him, thus treating him as an idiot.

By now the sky is slowly getting dark.

Xiang Shaolong decided to relax himself and allowed the four pretty maids to return and help him bath and change. He went out and joined Prince Xinling for dinner, keeping up pretenses all this while.

During dinner Xiang Shaolong said, "I'd like to practice my swordplay alone tonight, it's best that no one is sent over to serve me. Hei! Without Lady Ya, and with such alluring maids, it'll be terrible if I cannot refrain myself!"

Prince Xinling did not suspect anything at all and agreed with a laugh. He was secretly thinking to himself, as long as I send more people to keep an eye on you, and with Zhao Qian in my hands, need I worry that you'll fly away?

Xiang Shaolong returned to his building and immediately made a small hole in the roof and ejected his rope out, grabbing on to a large tree nearby before going into his room. He was about to carry his wooden sword when a knocking was heard on his door.

Xiang Shaolong had no choice but to hurriedly remove his equipment and walk out of the room to open the door. He saw Lady Pingyuan standing alone outside the door with a glow, looking at him deeply with very confused eyes.

He thought that something must be wrong and had no choice but to welcome her in.

Lady Pingyuan walked daintily and lightly towards his bedroom.

Xiang Shaolong was immediately scared mindless. Right now his bed is full of stuff that should not be seen so how can he allow her to go in. His mind worked quickly and he dashed forward, hugging her waist from the back.

Lady Pingyuan moaned daintily and collapsed softly into his arms, tears flowing down her cheeks.

In his entire life, Xiang Shaolong has never experienced so many women crying over him before and he felt a headache coming on seeing this. He turned her around, tilted up her pretty tear stained face and pretended to be helpless as he asked, "What's the matter!"

Lady Pingyuan closed her eyes, gritted her teeth, trying to control her sobs as she shook her head, looking utterly dejected.

No one other than Xiang Shaolong can understand her dilemma right now, wanting to harm him and send him to his death but yet can't help but come and see him. This is the reason for her torture!

Lady Pingyuan collapsed into Xiang Shaolong's arms, using all her strength to hug him, her pretty face buried in his wide chest as she continued sobbing.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly lamenting that with her around

like this, how is he going to save Zhao Qian and if those assassins from Chu Mohism were to arrive, he might not be able to preserve his own life as well.

Lady Pingyuan calmed down a little and said quietly as she nibbled his ear lobe, "Shaolong! Carry me into the room!"

Xiang Shaolong almost wanted to cry for help, how can his room be 'seen'? He hurriedly said, "Lady! Wasn't it supposed to be later before we can do it?"

Lady Pingyuan stamped her feet and pouted, "I want it now! Aren't you going to carry me in?"

Xiang Shaolong carried her up by her waist.

Suddenly there was a knock on the door again.

Both of them were equally startled.

A servant's voice was heard from outside, "Lady, the Prince has something urgent and wants you to see him immediately."

Xiang Shaolong put Lady Pingyuan down and pretended to be helpless and sighed. However he knows that once Prince Xinling received news that Lady Pingyuan has come to look for him, he's worried that his sister will let her emotions overrule her and spoil the plan, that's why he sent someone here to lead her away.

Lady Pingyuan first looked furious, then her expression darkened as she replied, "Coming!"

She rushed forward and hugged Xiang Shaolong tightly,

giving him a hot kiss filled with complicated feelings of joy, pain and farewell. After that she lowered her head and left, not turning back for another look.

At this point in time Xiang Shaolong doesn't know whether to hate her or love her, because that kiss earlier is really eternally unforgettable, getting right into his bones, with an inseparable mixture of love and hate.

When Xiang Shaolong arrived at the huge courtyard that Lady Pingyuan resides in, Zhao Qian's lonely heart was pining away for Xiang Shaolong. He has become this beautiful princess's only hope.

On one hand she has almost blind confidence towards Xiang Shaolong, but she's terrified that he will not know that she's being held captive here. When the two extremely conflicting thoughts were torturing her mind, the two ladies who were assigned to guard after her every move suddenly shuddered and fainted onto the ground consecutively. And the awe inspiring and handsome Xiang Shaolong appeared proudly in her room.

Zhao Qian was ecstatic and ran into Xiang Shaolong's warm and safe embrace, her dainty body trembling violently.

Xiang Shaolong carried her to a corner that is not easily visible from the door or windows, reached out and loosened her robes.

Although Zhao Qian has always been very obliging towards Xiang Shaolong, she was still shocked and secretly furious that this person still has the mood for such things during

such a dangerous time.

Just as she was about to object, Xiang Shaolong kissed her lips lovingly while continuing the removal of her robes.

Zhao Qian was feeling all soft and ticklish from his nimble fingers working on her overly sensitive skin and just as she was losing her senses, she realized Xiang Shaolong has removed the small bag on his back and is already attiring her alluring body which now only has a slip covering it, with a thick robe that can withstand the cold, covered with a black armored vest.

Xiang Shaolong squatted down and helped her change into shoes suited for long distance travel.

Zhao Qian was so moved that hot tears ran down her cheeks, her heart filled with happiness and gratitude. Even if she has to die for Xiang Shaolong now, she'll do it willingly.

Everything was done and Xiang Shaolong stood up, holding her tightly as if he's carrying the most precious treasure in the world and asked quietly, "Will my little treasure be obedient?"

Zhao Qian nodded her head vigorously.

Xiang Shaolong took out a cloth binding and tied the beautiful princess to his back, crossed her slender legs around his waist and tightened it with the cloth. the two of them merged as one, with no space between them.

Lady Ya made these cloth bindings in a hurry upon his request. Xiang Shaolong had undergone training before and

is well aware of the importance of being well equipped, so he was extremely well prepared before the mission.

Zhao Qian leaned on his strong back, her previous worries all swept away and she almost moaned in satisfaction and comfort.

Xiang Shaolong went to the window and looked out. He pushed open the window lightly and listened.

A patrol troop just walked past outside the building.

When they were far away, Xiang Shaolong went out the window with Zhao Qian on his back and landed lightly on the grass outside.

When he was training in the military, he often had to carry 10kg of things and climbed hills and valleys to train his stamina so a light beauty like her will definitely not hinder his movement.

In the woods, he'll suddenly stop moving, or he'll suddenly run madly like the wind, moving swiftly and nimbly forward. His destination is of course that two-level building which Prince Shaoyuan was staying in.

At the southeast corner gongs and drums were sounded, followed by the voices of people mixed with the barking of ferocious dogs.

Xiang Shaolong was shocked and looked towards the direction of the noises only to see fire blazing into the sky at that side. In this starless night the scene looked especially frightening.

He secretly commented that Fu Du really came at the right time and while everyone's attention were on the fire, he rapidly went towards Prince Shaoyuan's residence.

Shouts of fighting and weapons clanging were heard from the direction of the house Xiang Shaolong stayed in.

By now Xiang Shaolong has reached the flowerbeds behind Prince Shaoyuan's residence and saw that Prince Shaoyuan, together with Liu Chao and his men were running out of the house with weapons towards the sound of the fight.

He was secretly laughing to himself, because Liu Chao had already opened the window and he climbed into the house and went into the tunnel with familiarity. After he closed the entrance, he ran down the tunnel towards the back of the mountain.

His shoes were covered with soft cloth so even if he was running rapidly, no sound was emitted so he need not fear Prince Xinling will hear him. Besides, by now there's no way Prince Xinling will remain on his bed.

After running a distance, the tunnel made 90 degrees turn towards the south and in a short while, he was at the exit on the other end of the tunnel.

He took out his lock picking tools and unlocked the metal door. After closing it properly again, he followed the stone steps outside the door and reached the last door that leads to the ground level outside.

Outside is a dense forest, situated outside the southern wall

of Prince Xinling's residence.

After Xiang Shaolong sealed the tunnel properly, he checked out the directions and ran towards the nearest city wall of Daliang. As long as he can leave this city, chances of them escaping will be very much greater.

No one was on the dark streets, it's like a ghost city but hatefully, every household has a lantern hung outside their doors. Although the light was dim and the wind was blowing on the lanterns making them rock, but it makes hiding for him all the more difficult.

Xiang Shaolong tried his best to avoid the larger streets, sticking to the darker alleys.

Sounds of hooves were heard and Xiang Shaolong had just passed a main street but before he can dodge into an alley, the enemy noticed him and rode over shouting.

Xiang Shaolong was extremely perplexed, he cannot figure out how did Prince Xinling manage to find men so quickly to come after him?

But there's no use thinking about it now, he can only run for his life.

Zhao Qian who was lying down on his back was lightly trembling. Obviously she's very nervous which made him love and pity her more. Such an elegant beauty, to think she has to go through such difficulties!

After he ran out of the alley and had just turned into a main street, he heard hoof beats coming rapidly from the left, 10

odd riders were coming after them like the wind.

Xiang Shaolong knows that there's no way he can avoid them so he made up his mind and moved to a side, with his back against the houses and his front facing the enemies.

The riders all dismounted and one of them chortled, "Xiang Shaolong, let's see where you can escape to today?"

It turns out to be the one who treats animals as his teacher, Xiao Weimou and of course his left and right hand men Ning Chong and Zheng Lei were with him.

Xiang Shaolong quietly counted, there's altogether 19 of them and all of them looked strong and stout. Luckily the other party obviously came out in a hurry and did not have with them long distance weapons like bows and arrows, or else they could have killed them easily.

The 19 of them spread out and surrounded him in a crescent moon formation so that there's no way he can escape.

Xiao Weimou laughed icily, "I've expected you to try to escape at the last moment, so I've been keeping an eye on you day and night. Ha! That should be the beautiful princess you have on your back! Tonight I can guarantee that she will die in ecstasy."

His men on hearing his words started laughing lewdly.

Xiao Weimou added another sentence, "After I've had my fun, all of you will have a share!"

These ferocious men whooped, obviously they have already

regarded Zhao Qian as a sure catch.

Xiang Shaolong followed the things he learnt in the past during military training and breathed deep and long to maintain his calm and at the same time loosened the cloth that bind Zhao Qian to him. He instructed, "Qian'er! This is a life and death situation, you must be brave and no matter what you have to hide behind me."

Zhao Qian was so frightened that she was losing her senses but after hearing Xiang Shaolong's calm and confident voice, her courage increased and she stood firmly on the ground. However, the blood was not flowing properly to her limbs yet and she felt them go soft so she hurriedly pressed onto his shoulders and leaned on his back.

Xiao Weimou saw that this is a chance not to be missed so he waved his heavy sword and shouted, "Attack!"

Xiang Shaolong withdrew his wooden sword and stood his stance without a word, his eagle sharp eyes keeping track on the enemies who are coming towards him from the left, right and front.

Xiao Weimou led the rest and followed behind, tightening the encirclement towards Xiang Shaolong.

The people in the houses on both sides who were rudely awoken stuck their heads out the windows for a proper look but with swears coming from Xiao Weimou's men, they were so frightened they retracted, afraid to see what's happening.

Right at this time three long swords attacked towards Xiang

Shaolong simultaneously.

Once Xiang Shaolong saw his opponent's swordplay, he knows that he's facing formidable opponents. Since his men are already so good, naturally Xiao Weimou would be even better.

But now there's no time to think further, the hand which has a flying needle hidden flew out and struck right at the face of the enemy to his left. The wooden sword in his right hand blocked off the long sword attacking him from the middle and he used the opportunity where his opponent's sword was reflected up to execute a side kick and kicked hard on his opponent's groin, after which he fended off the attacker on the right with a sweep of his sword.

The one who got struck by the needle fell facing up, and died on the spot.

The one who got struck by the leg fell backwards, unable to get up.

Xiao Weimou did not expect him to be so formidable and was immediately furious as he shouted, "Attack!"

He raised his sword and attacked first, not giving him a chance to take out another flying needle.

Xiang Shaolong's left hand drew out Flying Rainbow from his waist. For a warrior like him who has undergone rigorous training, both his left and right hands are equally nimble and strong, not like the average person who favors only the use of one hand.

Xiang Shaolong cried out, "Qian'er follow me!" and he moved diagonally to avoid Xiao Weimou.

Zhao Qian followed behind him.

The murderous air from the flash of the swords came from three directions.

Xiang Shaolong knows that this is a matter of life and death and he cannot retreat. He felt valor rising up in him and vowed to protect the beauty behind him with his life. His right hand holding the wooden sword and left hand holding Flying Rainbow, he attacked fiercely, his magnificent and forceful aura is even stronger than the enemy's.

The sound of metal and wood clanging against each other was heard and blood was seen at the same time on Xiang Shaolong and his opponent. His chest was struck by the enemy's sword but luckily he has his armor and although his enemy's sword was sharp, it could only pierce through the armor a little and cause an injury about half an inch deep.

The other sword slashed towards his waist but it struck the belt that held his steel needles so he was not injured.

Such close combat is extremely dangerous, a case of either you perish or I die. Especially when Xiang Shaolong has to protect Zhao Qian behind him, he cannot try to avoid his enemy's sword so he was injured once they fought. It only leaves to be seen who will be the last to fall before a victor can be ascertained.

Amongst the five who attacked, one has his throat cut by

Flying Rainbow and died on the spot. His wooden sword struck another's arm and the long sword immediately fell to the ground as he hurriedly retreated while the other three were forced back by his attack.

The sound of weapons slicing through the air could be heard from his left and right and Xiang Shaolong swept his sword towards the right only to see Xiao Weimou dashing towards him from the right, waving his sword towards his head.

At the same time Zhao Qian screamed, another enemy was coming from the left near the wall, his target is obviously Zhao Qian.

Zheng Lei and Ning Chong whose swordsmanship were only below Xiao Weimou came attacking from the front one behind another with the aim to kill Xiang Shaolong with one blow.

These people are very experienced in fighting and once they strike they will not allow Xiang Shaolong any chance of escape.

The sword attack from Xiao Weimou who is aiming directly at him may look simple but it encompasses changes and at any time he can change it into a slash. Just that attack alone is enough to keep Xiang Shaolong busy, to the point that he dare not become distracted.

As for the other attacks he can only rely on his hearing to decide on the course of action.

Xiang Shaolong's used all his strength in his left hand which

was holding on to Flying Rainbow to heavily block against Zheng Lei's oncoming sword attack and the impact forced his opponent to retreat three steps back. He swept his left hand and Flying Rainbow flew out of his hand, transformed into a flash of light as it flew straight towards the chest of the man who was going towards Zhao Qian.

At the same time the wooden sword went up diagonally, blocking Xiao Weimou's deadly blow before going into Mozi swordplay's mysterious defensive mode but the wooden sword looks as if it's on the offensive rather than defensive such that even with Xiao Weimou's ferocity, he was stunned as well and retreated for the moment.

Right at this moment Ning Chong's sword came straight at his throat from the front.

There is not enough time for Xiang Shaolong to block with his wooden sword and in that instance he suddenly had an idea and jumped up.

'Clang!'

The sword which was aimed at his neck now hit the belt around his waist which was filled with the steel needles.

Just as Ning Chong was feeling surprised, Xiang Shaolong's wooden sword slashed vertically and hit him right on his head.

Sounds of bone cracking were immediately heard and Ning Chong fell to the side, knocking into two men who were advancing and all three of them fell to the ground.

Right at this time another enemy took the opportunity to stab towards his chest just as he was landing. A sharp pain resonated through his body and as Zhao Qian screamed, Xiang Shaolong gave a flying kick towards the front of his opponent. That person is still midway through his attack and with the kick he was sent tumbling backwards and knocked into another enemy who was coming up for an attack.

The sword was pulled sharply out from Xiang Shaolong's left armpit and fresh blood spurted out.

Since the beginning of the fight, although Xiang Shaolong suffered one light and one serious injury, he managed to kill four of his enemies and severely injure 3, with the expert fighter Ning Chong amongst the dead.

Everyone was in a blood fury and the remaining 12 attacked madly.

Xiao Weimou is all the more mad and came from the right again, with his sword slashing down.

Xiang Shaolong knows that after his injury, he's definitely not Xiao Weimou's match and cried out, "Qian'er follow me!"

And shifted to his left while staying close to the wall and blocking off the enemy's ferocious attacks with the wooden sword in his hand.

Xiao Weimou was blocked by his own men from attacking and in his anger he pulled his own men away and dashed in to attack.

Zhao Qian who was hiding behind Xiang Shaolong saw reflections from the swords and sabres surrounding them and fresh blood kept flowing from her beloved's body, only managed to follow him for 10 odd steps before her legs turned soft and she fell to the ground in a sitting position.

By now Xiang Shaolong has been injured numerous times by the swords and when he felt Zhao Qian falling down behind him, he thought to himself that it's the end. He geared up all his ferocity and without a care to himself, gathered his strength and made a sweeping strike, knocking the advancing enemies and also blocking one of Xiao Weimou's heavy slash.

Xiao Weimou did not use all his strength in this attack but because his arm strength has always been better than Xiang Shaolong, and also the latter is now tired out from the fierce fight, he immediately lost his hold on the wooden sword and it fell to the ground.

The 10 over wounds all over Xiang Shaolong's body was pouring blood and in that dangerous moment he gave a flying kick which landed right on Xiao Weimou's belly, making this ferocious man retreat quickly but it was obviously not enough to injure him.

Two swords came attacking.

Xiang Shaolong quickly pulled out two flying needles and with a flick of his hands, the needle on his right hand struck an enemy's chest while the needle on his left hand, because of the serious injury sustained to his arm, missed his target

and only struck the enemy's shoulder and that person ignored the needle injury and continued his advance.

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that this must surely be the end and he pulled his dagger out and was about to kill Zhao Qian first to spare her the torture of being raped when the sound of a bow was heard and an arrow flew over like lightning, piercing that person's neck, flinging him away with the impact as he died on the spot.

Both him and his enemies turned to look at the direction where the arrow came from and saw a strange person wearing an eerie mask, dressed in a long black robe and riding over speedily on a horse. That person threw away the bow and pulled out a long spear, dashing right into the battle.

The enemy quickly returned to the fight in shock.

That person's skills with the spear is extraordinary and also he's has just freshly joined the fight, all who opposed him were injured or killed, causing chaos to the enemy. In an instant he came next to Xiang Shaolong and extended the circle of the spear attack, forcing Xiao Weimou and the rest back. He called out quietly, "Aren't you getting up the horse!"

Xiang Shaolong could recognize it was Ji Yanran's voice and happily helped Zhao Qian up the horse, picked up his wooden sword before using the last of his strength to jump up behind Zhao Qian.

Ji Yanran immediately controlled the horse with her legs, the

spear in her hands danced around as it once again forced Xiao Weimou back and fought her way out of the encirclement, escaping with the two of them.

CHAPTER 6
Tending To Injuries At The Observatory
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG had countless nightmares.

He dreamt that the time machine sent him back to the 21st century where he was charged with the major crime of messing up history. Suddenly Shu'er and Su'er came to look for him with blood flowing from the orifices on their faces, blaming him for not avenging their deaths. And then countless different faces appeared before him.

These include his parents, relatives, friends, Mei Canniang, Wu Tingfang, the King of Zhao, Zhao Mu etc, and cries kept

ringing in his ears together with the wails of souls and ghosts!

In his haze he seems to know that he is pacing at death's door.

No! I must continue living. For others and for myself! I cannot give up.

His body alternated between hot and cold, his soul seems to have left his body, as if there's unbearable pain, but it feels totally numb as well.

He does not know how long he struggled at death's door before he finally regained consciousness.

For a moment, he seems to have returned to the safe military hostel in the 21st century.

Cheers erupted next to his bed, Zhao Qian fell on the side of the bed, tears streaming down her face as she laughed and cried.

Before Xiang Shaolong can take a close look at Zhao Qian, he felt darkness surrounding him again and he fainted.

When he regained consciousness again, his mind and body seems to be much better.

Zhao Qian is so happy that she can only cry bitterly.

Xiang Shaolong wiped her tears with his hand weakly and asked feebly, "What is this place, how long was I unconscious."

A familiar voice rang out from the door, "This is the highest

level of my Heaven Viewing Pagoda, on the 5th level. Shaolong you were unconscious for nine days. If it was someone else who was that seriously injured and lost that much blood, that person would have died long ago. But you're not the average person, so you definitely won't die. Obviously everything is planned by Heavens!"

Xiang Shaolong was momentarily stunned and saw a person walking towards the bed, and it turned out to be Zou Yan.

He never really liked this person and he cannot imagine why he would risk his own life to save him and asked in astonishment, "Why did Mister save me?"

Zhao Qian who was sitting by his bed replied, "You are really indebted to Mister Zou for saving your life. If not for his excellent healing skills and meticulous care..."

Zou Yan chortled and interrupted Zhao Qian's words and said as he lowered his head to take a closer look at Xiang Shaolong, "The person who really saved you is Ji Yanran. I just happened to be around! This Heaven Viewing Pagoda is a place I use to study astrology, and also the tallest building in Daliang. I guarantee that no one will search their way here. Besides I am in no way related to you, so no one will suspect me."

Xiang Shaolong's mood turned for the better and he slowly regained the strength to speak. He puzzled, "Mister still have not replied my earlier question."

Zou Yan smiled a little, "I'll have to start from the beginning. Three years ago, I found a new star in the state of Qi, moving

towards Tian Chang. The area where the Zhao and Wei borders meet and I know that the new leader of this era has finally appeared. Therefore I came to Daliang to look for a new master.”

Xiang Shaolong was totally befuddled, “What is Tian Chang? Is there a state of Zhao and state of Wei there as well?”

Zou Yan said proudly, “Heavens and humans are related, everything that happens on earth happens because of Heaven’s decree. My study of the five elements is based on the five stars in Heaven, wood, fire, earth, metal and water, and I deduce what will happen on earth based on Heaven’s decree. Tian Chang is how I separate the Heavens into different areas according to the layout of the states on earth. For example if a guest star happens to take over the main star of a certain area, then the ruler of that area will be in trouble.”

Xiang Shaolong is in no mood now to listen to such superstitious and outrageous theory so he asked, “So what has that got to do with me?”

Zou Yan looked at Zhao Qian, who was looking at him with her large pretty eyes, filled with idolization and he is all the more thrilled and started theorizing, “How can it not have anything to do with you? At the same time you arrived at Daliang. That new star happens to fly into the position of Daliang in Tian Chang, therefore I knew that the new saint has arrived. The first time I saw you, although I felt you have the aura of a dragon, I did not yet think of it until that night

when you talked about the earth shattering theory about governing a country; did I guess that you are the new saint. That night when you were attacked, I was convinced that I was right about you.”

After he spoke, he knelt down and kow-towed three times respectfully.

Xiang Shaolong was amused and quickly asked him to stand, saying “I can understand the front part, but why is it that you are even more convinced of your faith when I was attacked and injured?”

Zou Yan explained, “On that afternoon that you were attacked, Miss Ji returned moodily to the little house by the lake and after my prolonged questions did she reveal that you refused to woo her. Therefore I told her: the new star in heaven is being forced aside by another star, and I’m afraid you will meet with danger that night. That’s why Miss Ji was able to save you in time and send you here. Tell me, Shaolong, if you’re not the new saint, how can things be such a coincidence?”

Xiang Shaolong was dumbfounded.

A wave of fatigue swept over him and after he forced the medicine down, he fell into a deep sleep again.

When Xiang Shaolong woke up, he felt a lot better than the last time and was able to sit up and eat. Scars have begun to form over his 10 odd wounds, leaving only the wound under his armpit still in very much pain, but the other wounds were not affecting him.

Zou Yan has gone out, and there was only Zhao Qian in the highest level of this ancient observatory.

This pretty princess happily fed him the porridge cooked with precious and expensive herbs.

Xiang Shaolong looked at her sympathetically, "Qian'er! You've lost weight."

Zhao Qian replied gently, "Compared to the sacrifice you made for me, this is nothing. That night I saw how you were afraid that I would be injured and thus used your own body to block the sword blows from the thieves, my heart was utterly broken."

She continued worriedly, "Sister Yanran has not been here for three days, this is really worrying."

Xiang Shaolong felt an injection of energy, "Does she visit me often?"

Zhao Qian nodded her head, "She was so concerned about you, and comes every time to help me clean and dress your wounds."

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, "Doesn't that mean that the both of you have seen every part of my body?"

Zhao Qian blushed and nodded her head, but her pretty eyes revealed her joy and her expression looked absolutely alluring.

Xiang Shaolong felt lust arising and said gently as he grabbed her hand, "I must have revenge and see our Princess's whole

body.”

Zhao Qian gently pulled her dainty hands away and continued feeding him the porridge, saying with a blush, “See if you want to!”

A rush of love and sweetness welled up in Xiang Shaolong. To think that the beauty will allow this, how can he not feel grateful? He said with a smile, “Not only will I see, but I want to investigate with my hands as well, will Princess object?”

Zhao Qian blushed to her ears and stared at him, not daring to answer him but her expression shows her utter willingness.

Xiang Shaolong sighed happily.

Footsteps were heard from the stairs.

Both of them started getting nervous.

Ji Yanran’s sweet voice rung out, “No need to be afraid! It’s Yanran.”

Zhao Qian was overjoyed and went to welcome her.

In a short while the two ladies appeared shoulder to shoulder in front of Xiang Shaolong.

Ji Yanran lost weight as well but when she saw him her bright eyes shone immediately and her gaze intertwined with his.

Xiang Shaolong said, “Xiang Shaolong will never forget how Miss saved me.”

Ji Yanran sat on his bed without any embarrassment and first looked at his wounds before saying with a relieved sigh, "No need for such polite words. The rate of your recovery is astonishing. You don't know how frightening you looked the other night with fresh blood all over your body, and you almost made me cry because of you."

She continued with a blush on her pretty face, "And it's the first time Yanran cried over a man!"

Zhao Qian laughed, "You don't know how good Sister Yanran was towards you!"

Xiang Shaolong felt a boldness overcome him and daringly grabbed Ji Yanran's delicate hands and said gently, "It seems that not only have I passed, but I have taken a step further into your heart, right?"

Ji Yanran stared at him and said nonchalantly, "Sorry. You're still at the passing stage."

Although she said that, she did not try to retract her hands at all.

Xiang Shaolong was filled with love as he replied with a smile, "I have a chance as long as I've passed, didn't Miss Ji said that you will try your best to make it easier for me?"

Zhao Qian listened to their interesting exchange and can't help but steal a laugh at the side.

After Ji Yanran stared at Zhao Qian, she told Xiang Shaolong, "I came all the way here with so much difficult and am even sitting next to you, isn't it making it easier for you already?"

Xiang Shaolong was awakened by her words and returned to the cold and cruel reality, asking, "How is the situation outside?"

Ji Yanran said calmly, "Prince Xinling, Lord Longyang and Xiao Weimou are all trying their best to look for you and the defenses in the city has been increased numerous times. Even the areas outside the city and the river routes are filled with guards. I'm afraid you'll have to turn into a bird before you can fly out."

Xiang Shaolong asked with fear and concern, "What about the others?"

Zhao Qian sat closely next to Ji Yanran and said, "Don't worry! Qian'er asked Sister Yanran long ago, they've all escaped safely, not a single person was captured."

Xiang Shaolong was relieved but once he thought about Prince Xinling, he can't laugh. He's lost the 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual', so how can he possibly let him off?

Ji Yanran's expression turned serious as she said, "These few days the Weis have been going door to door searching your whereabouts, and they will ultimately find their way here. For the moment they're only keeping an eye on me and have not suspected Mister Zou yet. But as long as you remain in Daliang, you're still in extreme danger."

Zhao Qian said quietly, "Sister you're so capable, you'll surely have a way."

Ji Yanran replied, "I've been constantly thinking of a plan,

but security is so tight.”

She remembered something and told Xiang Shaolong, “Those equipments you have on your waist were all very strange, even a knowledgeable man like Mister Zou has never seen it before, where did you get it from?”

Xiang Shaolong knows she’s referring to the hooks and clasps used for climbing and replied, “It’s my own design, made by the craftsmen of Zhao. As long as we can reach the city walls, I will have a way to climb over the walls with Qian’er.”

Ji Yanran was very surprised and after scrutinizing him for a moment, sighed lightly, “The more I am in contact with you, the more I realize how unfathomable you are. But with the current situation, it’s impossible for you to reach the city walls without being detected by those at the watchtowers. Even if you can leave the city, you cannot avoid the thousands of soldiers outside the city, so we still need to think of another way.”

Zhao Qian went close to her ear and whispered, “Is Sister starting to like him more and more?”

Ji Yanran’s pretty face blushed. Sounds of bells ringing was suddenly heard in the room.

Before Xiang Shaolong can figure out what is happening, the expressions on the two ladies changed, “Enemies are approaching!”

Ji Yanran helped Xiang Shaolong up while Zhao Qian

hurriedly gathered all the blankets that has traces of blood and everything else that is associated with Xiang Shaolong.

Xiang Shaolong asked in shock, "Where can we hide?"

Ji Yanran helped him to a huge wardrobe and opened the door, only to see it filled with clothes inside with no space to hide a person at all. She then extended her hand and pushed. The clothes rose up miraculously and revealed a secret compartment inside. By now Zhao Qian has packed everything and even let the bed curtains loose before hurrying over to help Xiang Shaolong hide in the secret compartment. Ji Yanran pulled down the outer compartment holding the clothes and the wardrobe door closed automatically, how intricately done.

That space that was meant for hiding one person. Now has three people squeezed inside, so one can imagine how cramped it is. The three of them stuck to each other front to back, with Zhao Qian's alluring body pressing tightly against his back while Ji Yanran was squeezed face to face with him.

He can clearly feel the marvelous curves of Ji Yanran's body, especially when he's only wearing a pair of shorts, and the exciting fragrance almost made him forget about the danger they're now in.

Ji Yanran is a little taller than Zhao Qian, her pretty face happened to lean on his shoulder and she quietly whispered in his ear, "This is a place Mister Zou designed to save his own life, I did not expect we'd get to use it instead."

Although the place is cramped, it's not stuffy at all.

Obviously it has marvelously designed ventilation.

Xiang Shaolong suddenly had a thought; no matter how respected people in this era is, but they all have a fear of not living past another day. That's why Zou Yan has this secret compartment for hiding while Prince Xinling has his secret tunnel for escape. Suddenly there were strange noises in the secret compartment.

Xiang Shaolong concentrated and realized it's the rapid breathing of the two ladies. With the heaving of their bosoms, he can feel even more strongly the rubbing of their bodies against him. Luckily Xiang Shaolong's body is still feeling weak so he did not have any natural male reaction, or else the situation would be even more embarrassing.

The two ladies' bodies were becoming softer and weaker and Xiang Shaolong felt his lust arising and can't help but reach one arm forward and the other backward and hug them tightly.

Ji Yanran is a little better but Zhao Qian moaned and her slender arms encircled him from the back and hugged his waist tightly, her whole body heated up.

Footsteps were heard. Obviously someone was searching the place level by level until at least they reached this highest level.

Prince Xinling's voice can be heard outside, "This is the first time I've seen Mister Zou's observatory. Hey! What gadget is this?"

Zou Yan replied calmly, "This is an equipment used to measure the position of the stars in the sky, I am about to start making an exquisite and accurate map of the stars."

Prince Xinling is obviously not interested in the tour and he commented as he pushed the door open, "Hai! I thought there'll be something interesting in this room, it turns out only to be your bedroom."

Zou Yan laughed, "My work can only be done at night, how can I not have a place to sleep."

Prince Xinling said, "Why don't I go to your star observatory first to explore!"

Footsteps traveled up towards the balcony at the top.

The three of them just heaved a sigh of relief.

There were footsteps coming in again and that person searched thoroughly, even pulling the wardrobe door open, not leaving anything unchecked at all.

Their hearts were almost at their throats and were secretly cursing Prince Xinling for being cunning to lure Zou Yan away so that his men can do a thorough search.

After some disturbances, Prince Xinling and Zouyan came down.

The three of them were a little relieved and once again felt the excitement of their bodies and limbs intertwined together.

Zhao Qian and Ji Yanran are both unmarried ladies and

although they are very much interested in Xiang Shaolong, they still felt utterly embarrassed.

Zhao Qian is a little better as she's used to being intimate with Xiang Shaolong. Ji Yanran has never had the experience of being squeezed in a man's arm and her heart kept beating madly. In this quiet place how can these sound escape Xiang Shaolong's ears and just based on this point is enough to thorough make her feel ashamed.

Whether deliberately or not, the three of them almost felt as if they have no wish to leave this safe space.

Xiang Shaolong's lips leaned towards Ji Yanran's ears as he said quietly, "Hey!"

Ji Yanran raised her pretty face in a daze and in the darkness she can feel Xiang Shaolong's breath on her face. She felt utterly lost and forgot to speak.

Xiang Shaolong had wanted to ask her if they can go out now, but he suddenly felt her lips so close to his and thought to himself that what a better time to take advantage of her than this. So he kissed heavily on her soft and wet lips.

Ji Yanran's dainty body trembled and she finally followed Zhao Qian's example and extended her arms to hug him tightly while tilting her pretty face up, allowing this man to continue with his ungentlemanly bullying.

Footsteps were heard again.

Although she obviously knows that those on the outside cannot see what is inside, Ji Yanran still removed her lips

away from Xiang Shaolong's enticing mouth in fear.

Zou Yan's low voice was heard from outside the wardrobe, "You can come out?"

Xiang Shaolong felt that something was not right. With Prince Xinling's status, there's no reason that Zou Yan will not send him off personally and if that is the case, he will not be back so soon.

Besides if everyone else is gone, with Zou Yan's candid character, there's no reason for him to lower his voice so much that he sounded a little hoarse.

Zhao Qian at this time is totally intoxicated under Xiang Shaolong's strong manly embrace and will not be bothered with what is happening outside at all.

Although Ji Yanran's senses is a little lost, but in her cloudy mind she seems to believe that it is Zou Yan who is calling from the outside and was about to reply when Xiang Shaolong's lips sealed over hers again.

Ji Yanran secretly grumbled, thinking why is this person so lecherous that he's even ignoring Zou Yan's calls.

That person called out again twice.

Ji yanran slowly regained her senses and knew that something is not right and at the same time realized that Xiang Shaolong is not that lecherous after all.

The person outside cursed quietly, "Prince is really doing extra work. There's obviously no one but he still wants me to

go to every level and pretend to be Zou Yan can call out three times, hei!”

That person left after cursing.

The three of them all felt cold sweat down their bodies. Prince Xinling is really careful, and obviously he has many capable men under him. This person sounded really authentic in impersonating Zou Yan’s voice, just that his voice is a little lower and hoarse.

Ji Yanran has always prided herself on her intelligence and although her senses were dulled by Xiang Shaolong’s kisses, she still feel ashamed. At the same time she’s totally in awe of Xiang Shaolong’s intelligence and felt a love for him welling up from deep within her heart. She proactively kissed Xiang Shaolong back fiercely.

Xiang Shaolong’s hands explored the two women’s back and buttocks greedily and for a moment lust filled the secret compartment.

The earlier danger served only to fuel and excite their passion.

Just as it was about to get almost out of hand, footsteps were heard again, followed by the opening of the wardrobe door and the lifting of the front panel.

The two ladies were so embarrassed that they buried their heads in Xiang Shaolong’s neck.

Xiang Shaolong looked at Zou Yan with embarrassment as he said with a bitter smile, “It seems that I’m not some new

saint at all, because I do not have the resistance of a saint at all.”

Zou Yan was almost at a loss for words as he chuckled, “I think your recovery is even faster than what I imagined a saint would take.”

CHAPTER 7
Escape From Daliang
[Translated by JEAN]

FIVE DAYS later, Xiang Shaolong was able to get off the bed and walk. Besides the wound under his armpit, which still gave him some pain, he has regained all his strength.

The relationship between him and Zhao Qian has grown to a point that they cannot bear to be apart from each other. Although they are in hiding in the room all day long, they don't find the confinement difficult at all.

Ever since that day, Ji Yanran had not returned and according to Zou Yan, Prince Xinling has always been

suspecting her so he's keeping a very close eye on her.

Xiang Shaolong believes that Daliang's security will ultimately loosen up, because that is human nature, there's no way they can carry on with this forever. Besides, even after such a thorough search revealed nothing about their whereabouts, anyone would have thought that they have escaped.

That night just as they were embroiled intimately, Ji Yanran arrived and upon seeing the blushing Zhao Qian, her own face reddened as well, which made her look even more alluring and beautiful.

Xiang Shaolong's body was all heated up but he dare not get into the real act with Zhao Qian and on seeing this lady whose beauty is more than Zhao Qian arriving, he was secretly overjoyed. Just as he was about to start flirting with her, Zou Yan came up. Xiang Shaolong had no choice but to let go of Ji Yanran whom he was half forcing into a hug and let her sit on the rug.

Ji Yanran stared at him daintily for a moment, blaming him for behaving more and more rudely with her before she said, "10 days ago I sent some people out of the city and ordered them to dress up as both of you, even carrying a fake wooden sword with the purpose of letting others discover them. Now the plan is indeed working. Yesterday Prince Xinling personally led the troops and went towards the border of Chu in pursuit. The security at the gates of Daliang is more relaxed now, so it's time for you to leave."

Xiang Shaolong and Zou Yan both cheered, they did not expect Ji Yanran to have such a splendid plan. What is even more rare is that she only talked about it after the plan is a success, which shows how much self control she has.

Ji Yanran looked at Xiang Shaolong with sadness and unhappiness, her pretty face revealing how she cannot bear to part with him.

Xiang Shaolong was stunned and he asked, "You're not leaving with us?"

Ji Yanran shook her head, "I really wish to, but if I leave, everyone will know that I am connected with you and I will put many others in jeopardy, maybe even Mister Zou included. That day Prince Xinling came to search this observatory precisely because Yanran kept finding excuses to come here and look at the stars, and that aroused his suspicions."

Xiang Shaolong knows this to be the truth so he sighed and asked, "Then when can we meet again?"

Ji Yanran smiled prettily, "Don't worry! Yanran's greatest wish in life is to be able to assist the new saint in unifying the world so that the people need not have to suffer wars any more, so I will not let you off from now on."

Xiang Shaolong shook his head with a bitter smile, "I don't believe that I'm really the new saint. Even if I can return to Zhao, the way will be fraught with dangers. If you want to find the true new saint, you'd better be more patient in your search in case you find the wrong person and regret it in

future.”

His words were filled with jealousy, naturally because the reason Ji Yanran fell for him is all because he is that new saint.

A strange look flashed past Ji Yanran’s face and she lowered her head, not speaking.

Zou Yan said seriously, “What you’ve said further affirmed that you’re the new saint, because the especially bright star that represents you is now being chased by other stars. According to the heavens, you’ll need at least 20 years before you can unify the world and before that you’ll naturally face countless dangers.”

Xiang Shaolong’s body trembled as he heard all this and looked at Zou Yan dumbfounded and for the first time he dare not belittle this ancient astrologer because it is indeed about 20 years later that Emperor Qin unified the warring states and became the first emperor in history.

Ji Yanran suddenly said, “Mister Zou, Princess Qian, Yanran would like to ask you to wait outside the hall for a while. There’s something I have to speak with Xiang Shaolong about.”

Zou Yan and Zhao Qian understood her meaning so they went out the room and even closed the door.

Ji Yanran’s head was still lowered as she said quietly, “Xiang Shaolong, I want you to know clearly that Ji Yanran likes you as a person, and it has got nothing to do with whether

you're going to be the new saint or not."

Xiang Shaolong knows that his words earlier have hurt her and was feeling extremely apologetic so he reached out to hug her.

Ji Yanran exclaimed angrily, "Don't touch me!"

Xiang Shaolong is an expert in the field of love and knows that she finds it a loss of face if she accedes so he ignored her warning and jumped over, pressing her down on the rug and kissed her hard on her lips.

Ji Yanran gave a token struggle before her stronger reaction took over and she can't help but want to join with him immediately.

After their lips parted, Ji Yanran said sadly, "Tomorrow morning, Mister Han Fei will escort the grains he borrowed back to Han. Yanran has made arrangements with him, one of the carriages carrying the grains will have a secret compartment in it and it will certainly be able to bring you out of Daliang safely. Xiang Lang, Yanran will belong to your Xiang family and no matter what I will look for you. Don't forget about me!"

Xiang Shaolong and Zhao Qian hugged each other as they lay in the secret compartment under the carriage and left Daliang without much trouble towards the canal. When they reach that place they will change into traveling by boat and follow the river up west to the Han border.

Late snow was falling outside and the carriages moved

slowly. With thick blankets lining the bottom of the secret compartment, the two of them don't feel too uncomfortable at all. In fact they felt as if this is a warm and sweet little heaven.

The two of them behaved intimately for a while before they suppressed their desire so that they will not lose self-control and engage in the real act.

Zhao Qian looked at the top of the secret compartment and said sincerely, "I've never seen a girl more beautiful and intelligent than Sister Yanran. Just a little trick from her and she can escort us out of Daliang comfortably."

Xiang Shaolong looked at her beautiful profile but his mind was on another matter as he asked with a smile, "Would you mind not being a Princess!"

Zhao Qian turned around, leaned her face in her hands, her pretty eyes shining as she looked at him with love and said, "Qian'er will only mind one thing, and that is not becoming Xiang Shaolong's woman. I don't care about anything else."

Xiang Shaolong kissed her lips lovingly and said with a low sigh, "That will make things easier. I'll find a way to hide you then report that you've been killed by Xiao Weimou so you need not return to the palace and become a pitiful princess."

Zhao Qian was ecstatic, "Will you really do that for Qian'er? You're not afraid Imperial Father will punish you?"

Xiang Shaolong boasted, "I am the new saint, how can I possibly be so easily dealt with."

He continued with a chuckle, "Actually I'm doing this for myself. It's been to torturous suppressing myself."

Zhao Qian blushed brightly as she buried her head in his arms, saying quietly with a mixture of shyness and happiness, "Whenever Xiang Lang wants Qian'er. I'll give myself to you."

Xiang Shaolong was touched and hugged her tightly.

Zhao Qian said gently, "Didn't Qian'er ask Xiang Lang to kill Zhao Mu for me as revenge? I've now changed my mind, and only hope I can flee far away with Xiang Lang. I don't care about anything else."

Xiang Shaolong secretly sighed, what about avenging Shu'er? Zhao Mu and him, there can only be one.

The carriage stopped, it has reached the pier at the canal.

Three ships from the state of Han with twin masts returned to Han with the 10,000 stone of grains.

Xiang Shaolong and Zhao Qian, with Han Fei's cover, came out and hid inside a small cabin.

Although all the soldiers on the ship are Han, Han Fei is still cautious in case news gets leaked out.

The two of them were happily ensconced with each other especially now that they have unlocked the restriction of not being to join as one and both knows what will soon happen. Nothing much needs to be said about the flirtatious Xiang Shaolong, but even the usually gentle princess is starting to

become bolder.

Han Fei sent his trusted aide to send them their dinner and the both of them sat shoulder to shoulder on the rug, enjoying the meal.

Xiang Shaolong wanted to drink some wine but Zhao Qian forcefully took his wine cup away and said coquettishly, "No! Zhao Qian will not allow you to drink. I want you to be fully aware of what you're doing."

Xiang Shaolong looked at her pretty face and said while shaking and bobbing his head, "Even if wine will not intoxicate, the person will still feel intoxicated. Later when I see Princess's beautiful body lying on the bed, I will definitely be thoroughly intoxicated, how can I still stay sober!"

Zhao Qian fed him a piece of meat as she exclaimed happily, "So well said, and making me so happy on hearing it. I'll reward you with a piece of meat."

Xiang Shaolong took the piece of meat in his mouth and leapt over hugging her and extending his hands to loosen her clothing, saying with a smile, "Let me take a look at Princess's tender meat."

Zhao Qian was greatly embarrassed and tried to use her hands to fend him off but the ultimate winner is naturally Xiang Shaolong and his hands reached into her clothes through the sleeves and started having fun with the tender flesh inside.

The pretty princess's body totally softened as she curled into his arms as she accepted her beloved's attack with a mixture bashfulness and joy, saying gently at the same time, "It's snowing outside!"

Xiang Shaolong's hands were enjoying themselves so how can he possibly be bothered if it's snowing outside. He went close to her face as he continued his caress and said, "Is what I am doing now considered stealing what I'm supposed to guard?"

Zhao Qian guffawed and stroked his face a few times with her finger to signify that he should be feeling ashamed.

Xiang Shaolong's felt warmth in his heart.

Ancient beauties are even better than 21st century beauties. Because in this society where men are the center, their entire life is dependant on men, so they are more caring, more giving, not keeping away any part of themselves at all.

Zhao Qian suddenly thought of Ji Yanran and said, "Do you know that Sister Yanran is not a Wei, but the descendant of Yue royalty. That's why she's so beautiful and her martial arts so good."

Xiang Shaolong asked in puzzlement, "How do you know?"

Zhao Qian replied, "Of course I know it, when you were unconscious, we talked a lot."

She paused and continued with a smile, "Make a guess why the state of Han sent Master Han Fei who is not eloquent at all to come here and borrow rations? It turns out that the

King of Wei is frustrated with him trying to urge him to change policies all the time, so he deliberately gave him an impossible mission so as to humiliate him.”

Xiang Shaolong shook his head and sighed, “The state of Han is weak enough, and now there’s such a muddleheaded King who use such a serious matter of borrowing grains to vent his temper.”

Zhao Qian replied, “But the King of Wei made a wrong guess. Because Master Han Fei has Sister Yanran to help him persuade the King of Wei, who finally agreed to lend them rations. But of course the loan will have to be repaid.”

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, “Something is not quite right. It seems that Wei will really attack Zhao, or else there’s no need for them to be so nice to Han.”

Zhao Qian pouted, “Let’s not talk about such dampening matters, all right?”

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly apologized and laughed, “Come! Let me take a look at Princess’s pretty legs!” and he reached out his hands to remove her robes.

Zhao Qian screamed and leapt out from his arms.

Xiang Shaolong sat up and moved to her side before stretching his body lazily and groaned in comfort before yelling out incoherently, “Come! Let us do something great that will be unforgettable for the rest of our lives!”

Three days later, the ships entered the border of Han.

Xiang Shaolong and Zhao Qian bid their farewells to Han Fei and Han Fei ordered his man to bring them a handsome and extremely excellent horse that is totally black in color, saying, "Brother Xiang! This is Miss Ji's most beloved horse, and she especially told me to bring it along for you to use on your journey."

Zhao Qian exclaimed with an 'Ah', recognizing it to be the handsome horse that Ji Yanran rode that night while saving them and happily caressed its head.

Xiang Shaolong saw how the beauty has once again helped them and can't help but miss her, heaving a great sigh.

Naturally Han Fei understands his feelings and as he shook his hand in farewell, he said, "The trip to Wei this time, my biggest gain is getting to know a confidante like Yanran and a great hero with ambitions like Brother Xiang. This horse is named Jifeng (Gust of Wind). Take care!"

Xiang Shaolong recollected his emotions and bounded up Jifeng with Zhao Qian, speeding away like lightning and from far away they could still see Han Fei waving at them.

The two of them traveled by day and rested by night, traveling along the Han border up north towards Zhao.

Ji Yanran also prepared rations and a simple tent for them as well as some necessities needed for camping so that they need not worry over such matters.

Their mood during the return to Zhao is a lot different then when they were going to Wei. Now they're more relaxed

and Zhao Qian has tasted for the first time the joining between a man and a woman and has changed from a girl into a woman. She's as happy as a lark and kept singing tunes from Zhao in Xiang Shaolong's ears, giving him another sense of enjoyment.

The more the travel up north, the colder it got and when it started snowing, they had to find caves to hide in.

10 odd days later, they reached the wide forests of the Han border and after this area they will once again enter Wei border. It will take another three days before they can reach Zhao's border.

This is a famous hunting ground in Han, with low hills and valleys, with a mixture of pine trees and trees with wide leaves growing there as well as a large variety of other trees.

Black bears, horses, deer, mountain goats, wild rabbits etc can be seen everywhere as well as wild wolves, who sometimes ran after the horse in a pack. Xiang Shaolong had to kill a few with his needles and the wild wolves stopped to fight over and consume the bodies and finally stopped chasing them.

Both of them on one horse, galloping though the snowy forest with a layer of snow cloaked over the trees. The pure and clean scene is enough to take one's breath away.

This day they came to the western bank of a long river, the heart of the river has not yet turned to ice and the water reflected the snow and sun, flowing towards the northeast.

The weather turned harsher. The both of them were heavily wrapped up to their heads in thick cotton robes and on top of that wore cloaks to keep out the wind and all these could barely keep them warm from the snow.

The snow on the ground was up to knee level and even Jifeng had difficulty walking though it so they had no choice but to dismount and walk, hoping to find a family where they can spend the night with and hide from the snow.

Although it was bitterly cold, the scene of the endless snowy forest, the ever changing snowflakes are enough to take this pair of lovers' breaths away.

Silence surrounded them with only the sounds of their feet stepping on the soft snow can be heard.

Once in a while the roars of a ferocious tiger or howls of a wild wolf could be heard from the distance, making their hair stand.

At noon, the wind suddenly blew madly and the snowflakes flew haphazardly around like thousands of silver needles, shooting towards them, making them unable to keep their eyes open and their steps unsteady. After a while, Jifeng refused to move further.

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that no matter what they have to avoid this blizzard, but there no one in front of them, neither did they pass by any houses. Suddenly he remembered how he learnt to build an Eskimo's igloo while in military training, which is quick to make and appropriate. He suddenly felt like a kid again and went to the riverbank

and using his sharp knife, dug out frozen blocks of ice from the river. Under Zhao Qian's doubtful stare, he made a large ice house enough to house man and beast. He used the tent as a blanket and even chopped some wood and started setting up a fire inside and soon the whole house was warm and cozy. The blizzard became a romantic and fun event instead. Even Jifeng regained his usual calm.

Zhao Qian saw how capable her beloved is and all the more she idolizes him and sincerely wanted to make him feel good and enjoy her gentleness.

The two of them slept naked under the blanket, their limbs intertwined, whispering never-ending sweet nothings to each other and in the end fell into a sweet sleep in each other's arms. At dawn, they were suddenly startled awake by a strange noise.

They listened carefully and it turned out to be the sounds of birds happily playing as they flew across the sky. They got up and looked out the small snow window cut out for ventilation and saw that the sky is now clear and the blizzard has stopped falling.

They were ecstatic and hurriedly packed up, finally leaving that igloo filled with sweet memories with a tinge of sadness.

Xiang Shaolong was afraid that Jifeng would be too cold so he wrapped up its limbs with cotton strips and the belly as well so that the cold will not penetrate into its organs. He also made a simple sled and put all their luggages on it so

that Jifeng can pull it along with Xiang Shaolong leading him and Zhao Qian walking along by his side as they continued their journey north. By now they cannot tell if the land they're walking on belongs to Zhao or Wei. After all, borders are something made by men and nature itself will definitely not adhere to it.

The sheltered Zhao Qian was tired after walking less than half a mile and sat on the sled, letting Jifeng pull her along effortlessly.

The forest looks like it's filled with layers of tall walls, never ending as they weaved through it, making them feel as if they're lost in a maze. Luckily Xiang Shaolong is experienced in military travel and while the weather was clear a few days earlier, he found the position of the Polar Star and ascertained his location so they did not travel towards the wrong direction.

Snow was stacked up beneath their feet and occasionally they would see the prints of animals on the snow crisscrossing one another, making it into a strange and unique drawing. Naturally they also left behind them another set of endless scars.

The weather won't stay good for long, and it started snowing after noon, getting bigger as well.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly troubled, just as he was wondering if they should stop or continue, seven wooden huts appeared amongst the trees towards their left.

The two of them were overjoyed as they went towards the

houses.

The few wooden houses were built on a foundation of stone and made of pine wood with railings surrounding the house. There was snow packed on the roof and tall trees surrounded the front and back of the houses, making it a picturesque scene.

They liked what they saw on first sight and came to the front of the house and called out loudly but there was no reply.

Zhao Qian suddenly screamed and pointed at the entrance of the largest house, only to see it filled with bloodstains, the scene utterly shocking.

Xiang Shaolong walked closer for a look and realized that the bloodstains were still quite fresh. Obviously the incident happened not too long ago. Therefore he instructed Zhao Qian to wait outside while he went into the house alone. Not long after he came out with a solemn expression and after checking the other houses, returned to Zhao Qian's side and said, "Qian'er don't be startled, a terrible crime and tragedy just happened here. It seems that all the men, women, old and young were all gathered to this house in the middle and slaughtered. Even the dogs were not let off, and the women had signs of being raped."

Zhao Qian's expression paled as she asked, "Who did such a cruel thing?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "Either horse thieves or army troops, or else they would not have so easily taken control of these strong hunters."

Zhao Qian stammered, "What should we do?"

Before Shaolong could reply, hoof beats were heard.

Their feelings still unsettled, they turned around to take a look, only to see a person on top of a horse coming towards them. A huge burly man was seated on the horse and behind the horse he carried a pair of hunted wild deer.

That person is about 25 or 26 years old, his arms stouter than an average person's, his eyes gleaming, his face rough and gallant with a great aura about him. He saw them from afar and called out in greeting, "Friends, where are you from!" and added, "Teng Yi is back!"

Xiang Shaolong and Zhao Qian exchanged a look, both feeling sad for this returning man.

The burly man called Teng Yi slowed down his horse's progress. A strange look came over his eyes as he looked at the houses with no family coming out to welcome him, obviously feeling that something is not quite right.

Xiang Shaolong went forward first to block him and said earnestly, "Friend, please listen to me first."

Teng Yi jumped off his horse nimbly and asked him coldly, "Who are you people?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "We're just passing by, inside..."

Teng Yi pushed him away as he shouted, "Move aside!"

With Xiang Shaolong's weight and steady stance, to be pushed aside like that, and although he was caught

unawares, it can be seen that this Teng Yi has amazing arm strength.

Teng Yi dashed into the house like the wind, followed by an earth shattering and heart rending cry. Men truly do not cry easily, unless they are really heart broken!

Zhao Qian felt her nose stifling and leaned onto Xiang Shaolong's shoulders and wept as well.

There was a wild roar and Teng Yi rushed out with bloodshot eyes and his sword in his hand, pointing at Xiang Shaolong and asked, "Did you do this."

Xiang Shaolong and Zhao Qian looked at each other in shock.

Obviously extreme grief and fury has made Teng Yi lose his normal senses and he slashed towards his head with the sword.

Xiang Shaolong is already well prepared and pulled out his wooden sword and forcefully blocked this blow while pushing Zhao Qian away with his other hand.

Xiang Shaolong felt his arm go numb from blocking that blow and just as he was secretly thinking that this person's arm strength is comparable to Xiao Weimou, Teng Yi has made another attack like a crazed tiger. His swordplay was wide and extremely intricate and excellent.

Xiang Shaolong never expected to meet such a frightening swordsman in this wild snowy forest and dared not even split his concentration to try to explain. He followed the Mozi swordplay and only defended, not attacking and

retreating as he fought. After blocking off his opponent's 100 odd attacks, Teng Yiu suddenly cried out piteously and knelt down on the ground, holding his head and sobbing bitterly.

Zhao Qian ran over in fear and hid behind Xiang Shaolong as she called out, "Big man! We didn't kill those people inside."

Teng Yi nodded his head as he cried, "I know! You're using a wooden sword and there are no bloodstains on you. It's just that fury got to my head."

He then continued crying in the snow.

Teng Yi knelt in front of the newly erected tombstones, his expression wooden.

Right below, buried were his parents, brothers, wife and children.

A self-sufficing happy life is no longer something he has.

He doesn't even know who his enemy is, so he can only use all his effort and life to find them.

Hatred was gnawing at his bleeding heart.

Zhao Qian cried along with him.

Xiang Shaolong came up to Teng Yi's side and asked solemnly, "Does Brother Teng want to take revenge!"

Teng Yi suddenly lifted his head, a look of resolution shot out from his eyes as he said, "If Brother Xiang can allow me to avenge this hatred, I will give you my life."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that this person's sword

skill is excellent and his martial arts outstanding as well. If he has his help, it'll be even better. He nodded his head, "Did Brother Teng think why the thieves would gather everyone into one house?"

Teng Yi was stunned as he replied, "They're thinking of keeping the other six houses for use."

Xiang Shaolong was extremely impressed with his quick thinking and said, "So they will definitely come back, and it will be before dusk."

A strong look of hatred came over Teng Yi's eyes and he leaned forward to kiss the snow before coming towards Xiang Shaolong and grabbing his shoulders, said with gratitude, "Thank you! You'd better be on your way! Or else it'll be even more dangerous if you bump into them."

Xiang Shaolong smiled, "If you want to kill all your enemies, then you should not ask me to leave."

Teng Yi looked at Zhao Qian and shook his head, "Your little wife is both pretty and kind hearted, I do not wish harm to befall her. Although my three brothers are not as good as me, but they're not easily trifled with as well so obviously the enemy is a big group and highly skilled. We might not be able to fight and win them."

Xiang Shaolong said with confidence, "If it's a head on attack, naturally we're not their match but now that we're planning something against the unguarded, it's another story altogether. There's still some time left, we need to start preparing immediately."

CHAPTER 8
Revenge On The Snowy Grounds
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG and Teng Yi sat on the two sides of the window inside the house, waiting quietly for the cruel enemy to arrive. Teng Yi's emotions have calmed down, revealing the collected and stable composure of a highly skilled fighter but the pain and sadness in his eyes was intensified.

Xiang Shaolong wanted to keep his mind away and asked, "Has Brother Teng been hunting here for a living since young?"

Teng Yi was silent for a moment before saying quietly, "To tell you the truth, I once had the dream of doing a little something for Han so I was in the military before and even raised to the position of commander. Later I saw that the people on top were too much, they only know how to belittle talents and pander to outsiders so disheartened. I brought my family with me to live in seclusion here. But who'd expect..."

Sounds of hoof beats were heard. the two of them were immediately energized and stood up to look outside the window. Amongst the falling snowflakes, in the silvery white world outside, a group of men and horses rode towards them slowly.

Xiang Shaolong was stunned on seeing the scene and exclaimed hoarsely, "There's at least 60 to 70 people!"

Teng Yi replied coldly, "It's 90 to 100."

Xiang Shaolong took a closer look and looked back at him in surprise, saying with a nod, "Your observation is very accurate."

Teng Yi said, "Brother Xiang, you better leave! Just with the two of us, even with the traps we won't be able to handle so many people."

Xiang Shaolong was originally feeling numb and was toying with the idea of retreating but now that he knows that Teng Yi has his mind made up to fight to the death, his valor was stirred instead and he said seriously, "Brother Teng do not be pessimistic so quickly. As long as we can persevere a little

longer, once the sky turns dark, it'll be beneficial to our movement. Humph! I, Xiang Shaolong, is not one to retreat at the last moment."

Teng Yi looked at him in gratitude before focusing all his attention on the slowly approaching enemy. By now the sky is slowly darkening and Xiang Shaolong looked hard before he exclaimed in shock, "It's Xiao Weimou!"

And he felt a strong surge of apology.

Teng Yi had already heard his story and was stunned, "It's Xiao Weimou from the state of Qi!"

He sighed and continued, "Brother Xiang need not blame yourself, this has got nothing to do with you. You're a victim as well!"

Xiang Shaolong saw how understanding he was and felt a little better and at the same time gained more admiration for this highly skilled swordsman who is willing to lead a peaceful and boring life.

By now the large group came to the empty space in front of the houses and dismounted. The house that Xiang Shaolong and Teng Yi were hiding in was where the tragedy happened so logically, Xiao Weimou's men won't step in here. Xiao Weimou looked gloomy and Zhen Lei stood next to him, his expression not any better either.

Looking at his men move the saddles and luggage from the horses back and moving them into the other houses, Xiao Weimou cursed and fumed, "I'm definitely not wrong. Xiang

Shaolong pretended to escape to Chu but that is just a trick. If he wants to return to Zhao, there's only three ways. I bet he will not dare to travel through our Great Qi and the state of Wei, so the only route left is this path in Han, but why is it that we still cannot find him?"

Zhen Lei commented, "We came here by ships and traveled on the official paths, so it's not strange that we'll be about 10 days faster than him. Now we will stop and set a trap here and once he passes by this place, he'll certainly not be able to escape unnoticed from the 10 odd sentry posts we set up."

Xiao Weimou replied, "Remember not to hurt Zhao Qian!"

After he spoke he walked towards the house Xiang and Teng were hiding in. The both of them were overjoyed and moved separately to the two huge windows next to the door and raised their bows, getting ready to shoot as soon as he steps within shooting distance. Zhen Lei called out, "Head! That house..."

Xiao Weimou grinned fiendishly, "Such an exciting sight, it's good to see it one more time. I love to see women who has been raped and killed by me."

And then he walked forward with large strides. Xiang and Teng were ecstatic, as they got ready.

Suddenly someone cried out from afar, "Head! Something's wrong! There are fresh graves here."

Xiang and Teng instantly regretted their actions. They did

not expect Xiao Weimou to be so cautious as to send his men to take a look around. They know that the chance is not to be missed and the sound of the bows rang as two arrows shot out the window towards Xiao Weimou. At that point in time that fiend was about 300 steps away from them and on hearing the swishing of the air he was startled and immediately dodged aside.

He could have avoided both the arrows but because Xiang Shaolong knows that he's very nimble, he deliberately shot a little to the side so although he avoided Teng Yi's arrow, he could not avoid Xiang Shaolong's arrow, which shot through his shoulder. He cried out in pain as he fell backwards. A pity that it did not strike any of his vital points but it's enough to make him suffer.

At this point in time almost half of the 100 men were already in the six houses while the rest of the 40 odd men outside all cried out in alarm and dashed towards the house they were hiding in. Xiang Shaolong and Teng Yi hurriedly retreated towards the back door and once they reached the back of the house, they lighted the fire arrows and shot them towards the other houses.

These roofs and pine wood walls have all been tampered by them and a layer of inflammable pine oil has been poured on it so once it made contact with fire the flames spread immediately through the whole house and even the windows and doors were smeared with them. With the northern wind blowing, those who went into the houses seems to be in a space where they are cut off from the

outside world and after traveling for the whole day, they all lied down to rest, not knowing that something has happened outside. By the time they realized something was wrong, the whole house was engulfed in flames. For a moment screams were heard everywhere, as if it's hell on earth.

The 10 odd men who were running towards the house saw that they were about to reach the steps to the house when they suddenly felt the ground give way and they fell into the trap that Xiang and Teng made earlier, into a deep hole more than 10 feet deep and filled with pointed spikes so there's no way they can stay alive even with luck. In that instant, more than half of the almost 100 enemies were either killed or injured and even the leader Xiao Weimou was injured.

With fire seemingly shooting out from his eyes, Teng Yi roared as he dashed out, killing everyone on sight. Xiang Shaolong dashed out from the other side, two flying needles flew out and killed two bewildered thieves before he drew out his wooden sword and killed his way towards the direction of Xiao Weimou.

Xiang Weimou was being helped up by Zhen Lei and another man and he felt the intense pain on his shoulder where the arrow injured him as he moved. He knows that he cannot fight and although he saw his greatest enemy Xiang Shaolong, there's nothing he can do except grind his teeth in hatred and now that there's only 20 odd men left, he cried out angrily, "Let's leave!"

Zhen Lei and his man hurriedly helped him towards the nearest warhorse as they left in a hurry.

Xiang Shaolong looked around and shouted, "Xiao Weimou is leaving!"

The remaining thieves saw that it is indeed true and realized that the two of them were extremely highly skilled and although they have more people on their side, they could not take any advantage of them at all. In an instant their enemy killed another five of them and they all ran away in fear. Xiang Shaolong and Teng Yi saw that it's a chance not to be missed and they went after Xiao Weimou.

A few men who were loyal to Xiao Weimou turned back to stop them but they were soon gotten rid of by these two ferocious and highly skilled fighters. After Xiang Shaolong kicked a man flying away, he soon caught up with Xiao Weimou. Zhen Lei saw that they still have another 10 odd steps before reaching the horse so he pulled out his sword and turned back to block Xiang Shaolong.

Xiang Shaolong shouted, "Teng Yi! Give chase!"

As he slashed towards Zhen Lei. Zhen Lei is indeed a highly skilled fighter and blocked the blow with his own sword. He dashed forward without fear for himself and for a moment the sounds of swords slashing in the air was heard and the fight was intense. The worse thing is that Zhen Lei is fighting with the thought of perishing together with the enemy and for the time being there's nothing much Xiang Shaolong can do but to wait for the moment his attacks turn a little

weaker. By now Xiao Weimou has jumped onto the horse. Teng Yi arrived just in time and slashed with his sword. One of the men was about to turn around to fight but was caught in the slash and he was thrown seven steps back away by the impact, his blood spurting. This shows how strong is the hatred in his heart.

Xiao Weimou tolerated the intense pain as he clasped his legs around the horse's belly and rode out. Teng Yi roared and he leapt forward, his great hand extending out and he actually managed to grab the horse's back leg. The horse lost its balance as with a terrified neigh, fell down on the snow and Xiao Weimou was thrown off its back. Zhen Lei turned around for a look and was immediately terrified.

Xiang Shaolong was not one to miss the opportunity and he slashed thrice successively and on the third slash, Zhen Lei's long sword was thrown off and a huge opening was revealed. When Teng Yi leapt over and was tumbling around with Xiao Weimou, Xiang Shaolong's wooden sword pierced forward like lightning and Zhen Lei gave out a horrifying cry before he was thrown back by the impact and died on the spot. At this time Xiao Weimou was struggling, his hand pinching Teng Yi's throat and just as he was about to gather his strength to shatter the throat, Teng Yi pressed down hard on the arrow wound on his shoulder and the pain thoroughly numbed him for the moment and he loosened his grip as well.

Teng Yi sat on him and using his left hand, pulled out the arrow together with a piece of flesh as blood spurted out

from the wound. Even as Xiao Weimou was reeling from the pain, his right fist was plummeting on his chest like a hammer more than 10 times and the sounds of bones breaking can be heard. Blood flowed out from the orifices of Xiao Weimou's face and he died horribly on the spot. Teng Yi then fell off his body and crouched on the snow, crying bitterly.

Unexpectedly, Xiang Shaolong found his lost Flying Rainbow on Xiao Weimou's body and a wave of feelings rushed upon him. When Xiang Shaolong carried Zhao Qian up from the hidden hold underground, Zhao Qian was pale from worry and her delicate body was trembling.

The heavy snow stopped, stars filled the sky, pretty and alluring. Xiang Shaolong kissed her fragrant lips lovingly and carried her up by her waist and walked towards the graves. Teng Yi cut off Xiao Weimou's head and put it in front of the graves with incense as an offering.

Xiang Shaolong put Zhao Qian down and asked, "What does Brother Teng intend to do from now on?"

Teng Yi said calmly, "I have nothing left, except for my life and my sword, and I have no other concerns. If Brother Xiang doesn't mind, I will follow you in future. I am not afraid of any hardship or danger, or even death, as it will end this pitiful fate of mine!"

Xiang Shaolong was overjoyed as he replied, "I'd really love it, but Brother Teng need not wallow in sadness. You should get back your fighting spirit and start a new life!"

Teng Yi shook his head, "Brother Xiang will not understand the feelings I have for my wife, children and family. They are everything to me. Now that I have nothing left, besides the gratitude I feel for Brother Xiang, I will no longer have any feelings for anyone else. That is too painful."

Zhao Qian felt her nose sniffing, and started weeping. Teng Yi sighed, "Ai! Weepy little princess!"

Xiang Shaolong hugged Zhao Qian as he said offhandedly, "Xiao Weimou's head will be worth a lot. Does Brother Teng have any way of preserving it?"

Teng Yi replied, "That's easy. Just leave it to me!"

With Teng Yi who is familiar with the environment, their journey became a lot smoother. Not only he is an outstanding hunter, he's also an expert in barbeque and knows how to season the food with wild herbs and plants, gaining much compliments from Xiang and Zhao on the food. Teng Yi treated nature as if it is a religion. Believing that there are various types of deities in nature so whenever they came to a new place, he'll kiss the soil and pray for luck.

Five days later, they reached a large village near the border of Wei. There were a few hundred houses and a few animal enclosures scattered on the wide snowy plains and the scene looked beautiful and peaceful. It's really a paradise that one can hide away from in this chaotic warring period.

Not only is Teng Yi very familiar with the people here, he's also well respected. A few young shepherds saw him arriving and immediately flew back to the village to report and some

even came to welcome him with their gongs. Zhao Qian found all of these interesting and revealed a sweet smile, making Xiang Shaolong feel like carrying her into the room immediately and spend the night together.

Along the way there're always men, women, old and young who walked over to greet Teng Yi. The men can't help but stare at Zhao Qian while the women were stealing glances at Xiang Shaolong. 10 odd dogs came out from all over the place and ran after their horses, shaking their heads and tails at Teng Yi, showing their welcome.

"Brother Teng!"

The sound came from the top. Both Xiang and Zhao were startled and lifted their head to look only to see a skinny youth about 16 or 17 years old with long limbs. He's not considered handsome, but he has a suave, happy-go-lucky air about him with a happy and honest smile, his two legs swinging as he sat on the branch of a huge tree filled with snow about three feet off the ground, making one worry that if he were to lose his balance and fall, that'd be terrible.

Zhao Qian exclaimed in alarm, "Be careful! Stop shaking!"

That youth went 'Ah!', as if he only realized the danger now and fumbled, all the more causing him to lose his balance as he fell.

Zhao Qian was so frightened she closed her pretty eyes but did not hear the sound of anything heavy falling. When she opened her eyes, she saw the youth with his legs hanging off the tree. His arms around his chest and grinning at her as he

blinked. Zhao Qian stared at him angrily, upset with him for putting on such an act to scare her.

Xiang Shaolong was extremely impressed and complimented sincerely, "Friend, what great moves."

Teng Yi shouted, "Jing Jun aren't you going to come down!"

Jing Jun chortled and made two somersaults as if he's making a performance before landing lightly and nimbly on the snowy ground before asking Zhao Qian, "This regal and pretty looking miss, may I ask if you already have a husband!"

Zhao Qian stared at him with annoyance and thought that she is leaning so closely in Xiang Lang's arms and yet he had to ask this question.

Teng Yi said unhappily, "Control your slick mouth! This is the royal third Princess from the state of Zhao, how can you be so rude?"

Jing Jun was stunned as he looked at Xiang Shaolong and shouted, "This must be Xiang Shaolong who defeated Hui Hu and Ren Lang!"

Teng Yi and Xiang Shaolong exchanged looks of puzzlement before the former asked, "How did you know?"

Jing Jun replied, "I heard the Wei soldiers at the border talking about it. They instructed us to help them keep a look out for Master Xiang and the Princess. If I find out anything, they'll give me a hundred taels of silver."

Zhao Qian was frightened, "You wouldn't do that right?"

Jing Jun jumped up without any effort and did a back somersault before kneeling on the ground, his hand clasped around his fist as he said, "Of course I won't. I have made a decision to follow Master Xiang and roam the outside world. Master Xiang, please accept my request."

Xiang Shaolong felt a liking for this person and looked at Teng Yi, meaning that he will respect his thoughts on this.

Teng Yi nodded his head, "Jing Jun is the most outstanding hunter here and an expert in sneaky acts. I came especially to this village this time because I would like Brother Xiang to meet this lad who dreams of roaming the outside world all the time."

Xiang Shaolong chortled, "Get up! Follow me in future then!"

Jing Jun was so happy he jumped up and made three continuous somersaults as he cried out, "Let me go and scout the roads first, I'll certainly come back tomorrow morning with a report!"

And he was far away in an instant.

Xiang Shaolong saw how obedient he is and was secretly happy.

That night they stayed in the village head's house and received the warmest welcome. During the feast, all the elders in the village came and it was extremely lively. Before bedtime, Teng Yi told the two of them. "If you hear any

weird sounds tonight, do not come out, because someone will be here to kidnap the village head's daughter."

Xiang and Zhao were perplexed and could not understand why would there be thieves stealing women away. Teng Yi explained, "This is a local custom, the night before the wedding there will be a ceremony to steal the bride away. Everyone will pretend nothing is happening and after the groom steals the girl home, they will consummate the marriage immediately. The next morning they will return to the girl's home to hold the wedding ceremony. You can take part in the wedding feast as well."

The sounds of drums shocked the lovers awake from their dreams. At this time the sky is not yet bright and Xiang and Zhao climbed out from under their warm blankets bleary eyed and hurriedly washed up and changed. By the time they walked to the hall, it's already filled with people here to take part in the wedding ceremony. They were arranged, together with Teng Yi, to sit behind the family to view the ceremony.

The village head and his four wives were seated at the front row and the newly weds were dressed in red robes and crowns, each kneeling on one side and holding a basket of fresh fruits. The guests all clapped and sang to express their congratulations.

Zhao Qian was smiling from ear to ear and she went closer to Xiang Shaolong's ear and whispered, "Xiang Lang! Qian'er wants to wear a wedding outfit like that as well and marry

you.”

He felt sweetness in his heart and replied, “One day when we escape from Handan, we’ll hold a wedding ceremony like theirs immediately, all right?”

Zhao Qian nodded her head furiously.

At this time, someone tied strings made with seven colors around the wrists of the newly weds and everyone gave their blessings like wishing them togetherness til old age and hearts joined forever. The ceremony is simple yet significant. After that they had a feast of more than 10 tables at the great ancestral hall in the middle of the village where the whole village attended. The little kids wearing new clothes were even more happy, using their laughter and noisy play to add to this joyous atmosphere.

As the wine warmed them up to their ears, Jing Jun returned and went behind Teng and Xiang, saying with a lowered voice, “The defences between Wei and Zhao are tighter than normal, everyone is keen on capturing Master Xiang and the Princess to get the reward. Luckily I know of a secret route via the water so if we take advantage of the snow and the cover of the night, we’ll definitely be able to sneak back into Zhao.”

Xiang Shaolong said happily, “If only it’d start snowing soon!”

Teng Yi looked up the sky and commented, “Don’t worry! There will certainly be a heavy snowfall tonight.”

Teng Yi's prediction truly did not disappoint as balls of snowflakes started falling since dusk. By now the four of them have already passed the border between Han and Wei and made their wooden rafts, to be controlled by Teng and Jing. With the water and wind going in the right direction, they safely returned within Zhao's border the next morning.

CHAPTER 9
Shocking And Sad News
[Translated by JEAN]

THE NEXT DAY at dusk, the four of them arrived at the sentry post just inside the Zhao border and outside the city of the Zi district. By now Zhao Qian has dressed up as a man, masquerading as Jing Jun's younger brother. Because none of the generals outside has ever seen this beautiful third Princess, so as long as they're out of Handan, no one will be able to reveal her real identity.

The guard on top of the city walls called out to the four of them to stop and when he saw it's Xiang Shaolong, the guard

immediately opened the gate to let them in without even waiting for his superior's instruction. His attitude was extremely respectful, which shows how well respected and famous Xiang Shaolong is within the Zhao army now. The truth is when Xiang Shaolong sent back the heads of the thieves he killed, the weapons and war horses back to Zhao after each victory, the first to know are usually these guards, so naturally they have a very high opinion of Xiang Shaolong.

Under the escort of the Zhao army, Xiang Shaolong and the rest rode towards the city of Zi. Zhao Qian's horse riding skills are quite good and sitting high atop the horse; looks like a handsome young man. Before they reach Zi, suddenly there was a team of Zhao soldiers riding towards them. The two groups slowly got closer to each other and Xiang Shaolong recognized the two leaders. One of them is the general in charge of defending the city, General Wa Che. And the other is shockingly his great enemy Zhao Mu. Zhao Qian and Xiang Shaolong's expressions changed. But by now it's too late to avoid them so they can only grit their teeth and move forward.

Zhao Mu hastened his horse and came forward with Wa Che hurrying to keep up with him. The two groups met and all of them dismounted. Zhao Mu saw Zhao Qian dressed as a man and immediately recognized her, his eyes shone with greed as he knelt down and paid his respects, "The Marquis of Julu pays his respect to Third Princess!"

This shocked Wa Che and the rest so much that they hurriedly fell to their knees in respect. Xiang Shaolong was

secretly lamenting that Zhao Mu's sudden appearance has spoiled what he thought was a perfect arrangement, and now he has to deal with the outcome if Zhao Qian is found to have lost her virginity. Zhao Qian was surprisingly calm as she said, "Marquis of Julu, please rise!"

This time it's Xiang Shaolong, together with Teng Yi and Jing Jun's turn to pay their respects to Zhao Mu. the two of them already knows the relationship between Xiang Shaolong and Zhao Mu so they pretended to be extremely respectful but of course were cursing the ancestors of this conniving fiend in their hearts.

Zhao Mu instructed Wa Che, "The third Princess must have endured a lot of shock and suffering along the journey, send her quickly back to the city to rest."

Zhao Qian was quite obedient and without even taking a look at Xiang Shaolong, followed Wa Che back.

Zhao Mu and Xiang Shaolong rode alongside each other and he complimented, "Lady Ya and Cheng Xu has already told what happened in Daliang to his Majesty. His Majesty is extremely pleased with how Shaolong reacted to the situation and your intellect. The only problem is that muddle headed King Anli sent an envoy to blame his Majesty that he has not even set eyes on third Princess and you've already kidnapped her. This matter is quite troublesome and it seems that more will come."

Xiang Shaolong pretended to fully trust him and loyal as he said, "I hope that Marquis will say a few nice words in front

of his Majesty for me.”

Zhao Mu replied insincerely, “That is but of course!”

He also asked about Teng Yi and Jing Jun. Xiang Shaolong replied, “They’re Hans who have helped me and I have accepted them as my family servants.”

He did not mention anything about Xiao Weimou. Zhao Mu asked quietly, “Did Shaolong meet with any enemies on the way back?”

Xiang Shaolong’s intuition told him that Zhao Mu’s words are not as simple as it seems. Besides with Zhao Mu’s status, why would he come here especially to wait for him? Or could it be that Zhao Mu and Xiao Weimou have some secret relationship? At the same time he remembered that Xiao Weimou once said that Zhao Qian must not be harmed, it could be because he promised Zhao Mu that he’ll hand her to him.

He replied, “I met Xiao Weimou, and also chopped off his head!”

Zhao Mu was stunned and asked hoarsely, “What?”

Xiang Shaolong is all the more certain of his guess. If Zhao Mu is not sure of Xiao Weimou’s ability, why else would he be so shocked. After he heard Xiang Shaolong repeat his words again, Zhao Mu was silent for a moment before he turned his head and stared at him, saying “According to our spies in Daliang, that night when you escaped from Prince Xinling’s residence you were surrounded by Xiao Weimou

and his men, but someone later saved you and sent you out of Daliang. Who is that person?"

Xiang Shaolong is all the more certain that Zhao Mu is in cahoots with Xiao Weimou. Because at that time things happened so quickly, and the residents there dared not witness the fight for fear of getting trouble on themselves. Besides, onlookers would not know that they were surrounded by Xiao Weimou and his men. They would think that they're Wei soldiers. But now Zhao Mu is so certain of what happened, the only reason is that the news came from Xiao Weimou.

He was secretly cursing but on the surface he pretended to be nonchalant as he sighed, "I'd like to know who was that hero who saved me as well, but he left after taking me and the Princess away from danger, not even leaving us his name."

Zhao Mu furrowed his brow, "Weren't you seriously injured then?"

Xiang Shaolong was secretly chortling, thinking that evil fiend has finally let the cat out of the bag. If not for Xiao Weimou telling him, how would he have known that he was seriously injured? He pretended to be puzzled and looked at him, asking "Who told you that I was seriously injured, it's just all superficial wounds!"

Zhao Mu knows that he has revealed too much and coughed dryly to cover up his embarrassment. By now the team has entered the city walls of Zi. Xiang Shaolong thought to

himself: Just come! Let's see who shall be the ultimate victor.

The next morning Xiang Shaolong, Zhao Mu and the rest started the journey as soon as it was bright. Following the official path they reached Handan two days later and entered the Palace immediately to see the King of Zhao. He arranged for Teng Yi and Jing Jun to return to the Wu family first. The King of Zhao received him in the Politics Discussion Hall, and Zhao Mu was the only one accompanying him.

After respects was paid to the ruler, King Xiaocheng walked down the stone steps from his dragon throne and with his hands clasped behind his back, commented, "Shaolong! Tell me how I should deal with you? You successfully stole 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual' and killed Hui Hu, eliminating a troublemaker for our Great Zhao and achieved great accomplishments. But you did not wait for my instructions and brought the third Princess back on your own accord, making me go back on my words towards the Weis. Tell me! Should I reward or punish you."

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be astonished as he knelt down and said, "Your subordinate knows he's made a mistake, but I was really forced by circumstances, the Weis were..."

The King of Zhao interrupted him, "No need for more words, whatever you wanted to say, my royal sister Lady Ya has already told me. But ultimately you did not accomplish the mission I gave you. If King Anli goes back on the marriage agreement, then just let him go back on his words. But now

it has turned out that he is putting the blame on me, tell me how should I account for this?"

Xiang Shaolong felt fury rising up and almost wanted to strangle King Xiaocheng. A father who does not care about the happiness of his own daughter, how can he be fit to rule a country. He controlled his temper and removed the bag on his back which contained the head of Xiao Weimou and said, "Your Majesty can return Xiao Weimou's head to the King of Wei and he will know that we have found out about his collaboration with Xiao Weimou, then he will no longer pursue this matter!"

The King of Zhao looked at the bag in surprise then looked at Zhao Mu, not quite knowing what to do with Xiang Shaolong's suggestion.

Zhao Mu pretended to be the good guy and said, "Shaolong, you've made a very bold suggestion. But the King of Wei can always deny his relationship with Xiao Weimou, or even say that you're setting him up. Hai! Shaolong is still inexperienced indeed."

Xiang Shaolong expected that this conniving thief would say this so he said with a smile, "Both they and us are just looking for excuses! Your Majesty need only tell Anli that I was trying to save the Princess, that's why I escaped back to Handan in order to hide from Xiao Weimou's pursuit. It's simply not safe within Wei's borders. If the Weis want to marry the Princess then ask him to send someone here to escort the Princess, let's see what he will do?"

Zhao Mu did not expect Xiang Shaolong to come out with such a plan and for a moment had no argument.

The King of Zhao was stunned for a moment before nodding his head, "This is a good idea to round things up. We'll do just that and see how that old man Anli is going to react?"

He then told Xiang Shaolong, "For now I'll take it that your accomplishments have atoned for your mistakes and you can keep your current position. Rest well for the next few days! If there's anything else I will summon you into the Palace."

Xiang Shaolong was relieved and hurriedly bid his leave.

Xiang Shaolong had just stepped out of the Palace gates when Cheng Xu came up. However there was no joy of meeting after a long absence and instead he lowered his voice and said seriously, "Lady Ya is waiting for Commander Xiang."

Followed by a sigh. Xiang Shaolong feels a dark omen and taking a deep breath, asked, "What happened?"

Extreme sadness shot out of Cheng Xu's eyes as he gritted his teeth and said, "Lady Ni is dead!"

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, "What?"

Cheng Xu said dejectedly, "It happened on the third day after you left. When the maid went to her room that morning, she saw her holding a sharp dagger. Her belly had a fatal wound and the bed was stained red by her blood."

Xiang Shaolong felt as if he is falling from Heaven straight into hell, the blood in his body turning cold, his chest felt as if it has been pounded by a thousand kilo force, his breathing difficult and all the strength in his body suddenly disappearing. He staggered and almost fell to the ground if not for Cheng Xu supporting him.

His face turned as pale as paper and tears fell uncontrollably down his cheeks. He thought of Lady Ni's love and elegance, yet such a horrible death befell her, is there justice in the world?

After Cheng Xu steadied him on his feet, Xiang Shaolong said through gritted teeth, "She certainly will not commit suicide, don't those maids know anything?"

Cheng Xu sighed, "That's all we know upon our return. Now all those maids have been dismissed and we can't even find one of them to question. Those in court are fearful of Zhao Mu and dared not ask too many questions. His Majesty is now totally under Zhao Mu's control and will not object to anything he says."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed hoarsely, "Zhao Mu?"

And he slowly understood. Zhao Mu saw that Lady Ni has given in to him and was extremely jealous so he secretly went to rape Zhao Ni. Zhao Ni was distraught after the shameful ordeal so she used death to wash off her shame. That conniving thief Zhao Mu, who is worst than an animal! A sudden stab of pain and sadness rushed to his heart and Xiang Shaolong finally broke down and wept bitterly.

Xiang Shaolong hugged Zhao Ya tightly, as if he's afraid that she will suddenly disappear like Zhao Ni. Lady Ya cried hot tears together with him and wailed, "Xiang Lang! Brace yourself, all the more Zhao Mu will not let you and the Wu family off. If you don't pull yourself together we'll all die under his hands sooner or later."

Xiang Shaolong asked, "Where is Xiao Pan?"

Lady Ya replied, "For now he is under the care of my royal sister. This child is indeed strange, after crying for a few days, he kept quiet and has not cried since, only saying that he wants to wait for your return."

As she spoke the last words, Zhao Pan's voice could be heard screaming madly from outside, "Teacher!"

Xiang Shaolong pushed Lady Ya aside and hugged Zhao Pan who had ran into his arms.

This little lad has lost a lot of weight and he cried bitterly, "Teacher! It's Zhao Mu that conniving thief who cause Mother to die, I feel such deep hatred in my heart!"

Xiang Shaolong became calmer instead and asked, "Tell me what happened that night."

Zhao Pan replied, "I don't know anything at all. That day his Majesty sent someone to bring over some snacks and I fell into a deep sleep after eating it. When I woke up Mother is already dead and even her body had been moved away. Mother is so pitiful!" and he cried bitterly again.

Lady Ya couldn't control her sadness and leaned on Xiang

Shaolong's back and sobbed uncontrollably and a cloud of despair surrounded them.

Xiang Shaolong reached out to hug Lady Ya and said quietly, "From today onwards, Xiao Pan you will follow your royal Aunt Ya. We must certainly avenge your mother, but we cannot act rashly or else it'll only give that conniving thief an excuse to deal with us, understand?"

Zhao Pan nodded his head vigorously, "Xiao Pan understands totally. All these time I have been practicing my swordplay everyday as you have instructed. I want to kill Zhao Mu personally."

Xiang Shaolong told Zhao Ya, "Ya'er, take good care of Xiao Pan. For now Zhao Mu will not dare to do anything to you and Qian'er, but it's still better to be careful. Will you be able to get Qian'er out of the palace to stay with you at your residence outside the palace, and at the same time tell Zhao Da and the rest to increase defenses and not give Zhao Mu any opportunities?"

Zhao Ya replied, "Although Imperial brother usually does not bother himself with Princess Qian's matters, now because of her marriage agreement with the Weis, it might be a bit difficult to get her out of the Palace. But I will think of a way. After I retrieved the 'Secret Manual', Imperial Brother has regarded me highly, maybe I can persuade him."

Xiang Shaolong thought of something and after telling Zhao Pan to leave first, he told Zhao Ya that he's already having a physical relationship with Zhao Qian.

Zhao Ya's expression changed, "What shall we do? Zhao Mu will certainly coerce Imperial brother to give orders to check if Zhao Qian is still intact. If they find a problem, they'll definitely not let you off."

Xiang Shaolong replied, "Zhao Mu is extremely distracted right now and may not think of this point for now."

He continued with a furrowed brow, "Just how do you determine if Qian'er is still a virgin?"

Zhao Ya replied, "Mainly is to see if her hymen is still intact."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought so that's the case and asked, "Who will do the inspection?"

Zhao Ya replied, "It should be the empress who inspects personally, because of Zhao Qian's royal status, no one else is allowed to touch her body."

Xiang Shaolong thought of the Zhao empress and a thread of hope filled his heart as he said, "No matter what, try to get Qian'er away from the dangerous Palace first, then we'll think of how to deal with Zhao Mu."

By now Tao Fang has arrived with Wu Tingfang and Ting Fangshi and after the long parting, the reunion is certainly a joyful one. If not for the death of Lady Ni, this would be the happiest moment in his life, but now it's a different matter altogether.

In the secret chamber in the Wu family stronghold, they held the first important meeting since Xiang Shaolong's return. Besides Master Wu, Wu Yingyuan and Tao Fang, there's also

the leader of the family soldiers Wu Zhuo. Now he has become Xiang Shaolong's closest and most reliable battle mate.

Master Wu first expressed his admiration towards Xiang Shaolong, "Shaolong has outdone himself in Wei and his actions have caused quite a stir. Now everyone regards Shaolong as Zhao's most promising person. But at the same time it has aroused the jealousy of Zhao Mu's gang."

Wu Yingyuan said, "Now we have no other choice but to throw in our lot with the Qins. That's the only chance of surviving, or else we'll just be sitting and waiting to die."

Everyone's heart was heavy. Besides Qin and Zhao, of the remaining five states, Wei and Qi all hates Xiang Shaolong to the core, Yan has trouble protecting herself and is currently under attack by Lian Po while Han is weak. The remaining state of Chu is too far away and they don't have many connections with the Wu family as well. Therefore the only way out is to join Qin.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly laughing bitterly to himself. When he came to the warring states period on the time machine, he had intended to ally himself with Emperor Qin who has fallen on bad times here but later troubles kept coming one after another and he did not even have time to take a breather. He did not expect that after all the twists and turns, he'll end up back on this old road.

Wu Yingyuan continued, "I just made contact last month with the man Tu Xian sent."

Looking at Xiang Shaolong's lost look, he explained, "Tu Xian is Lu Buwei's best family warrior, having both brains and bravery with excellent sword skill. He's on quite good terms with me."

He continued with a sigh, "According to Tu Xian, although Qin's King Zhuangxiang ascended the throne, but because everyone suspects that he killed King Xiaowen with Lu Buwei and King Zhuangxiang has been staying in Zhao for a long period of time, it's very difficult for Lu Buwei to become the premier for now."

Tao Fang's expression paled, "If Lu Buwei is thrown out, it'll be the end for us too."

Master Wu said, "We're now secretly helping Lu Buwei in various ways. Luckily this person is very experienced and cunning. He'll not be kicked out so easily. As long as King Zhuangxiang stands on his side, there will be a way."

Wu Yingyuan said, "This is the most important point. The woman King Zhuangxiang loves most is Zhu Ji (Concubine Zhu) and the son he pampers most is Ying Zheng. As long as we can send mother and son back to Xianyang, we'll be able to capture King Zhuangxiang's heart tightly. We're the only ones who can accomplish this matter, although it will be a difficult task."

Tao Fang was afraid that Xiang Shaolong would not understand and explained, "Zhu Ji was originally Lu Buwei's beloved mistress and in order to make King Zhuangxiang happy, he gave her to him to become his wife."

Master Wu said, "This woman's beauty can rival a country and is very good in flirting and handling men. She's also extremely loyal to Lu Buwei, so if we have her next to King Zhuangxiang, we can guarantee that King Zhuangxiang will not be against Lu Buwei."

Xiang Shaolong can't help but ask, "So is Ying Zheng the son of Lu Buwei or King Zhuangxiang, how old is he this year?"

Wu Yingyuan was stunned, "I'm afraid the only person who knows is Zhu Ji. Ying Zheng was born before the battle of Chang Ping, so he should be more than 13 years old now, most likely between 15 or 16 years old."

Xiang Shaolong was perplexed, according to history books Emperor Qin was only 13 when he ascends the throne a few years later. How can it be possible that the history books are so wrong?

Wu Yingyuan said, "I've made an agreement with Tu Xian and will try to send Zhu Ji and her son back to Xianyang in the shortest time possible. So the most important task at hand now is not to kill Zhao Mu, but to try and make contact with Zhu Ji and her son to see how we can stealthily take them out of Handan."

Xiang Shaolong asked somberly, "How many useful men do we have on hand right now?"

Wu Zhuo replied, "We have two groups of warriors under us, one group are the good fighters we attracted from the various states but these people are not reliable and may very well run away when something happens. The other

groups are the orphans I adopted for Godfather from various places and the blood relations of the Wu family, which amounts to about 2000 men and they are all trustworthy, willing to even lay their life down for the Wu family.”

Xiang Shaolong asked, “If we want to move Zhu Ji and her son away, what would be the biggest obstacle?”

Tao Fang replied, “It’s still that conniving thief Zhao Mu, the biggest problem is that he’s made Ying Zheng so happy that he totally listens to him.”

Xiang Shaolong gritted his teeth, “That conniving thief again!”

Master Wu said, “Do not belittle Zhao Mu. Not only has that fellow controlled King Xiaocheng, he’s also joined forces with Guo Zhong, so the largest Warrior Association and Mohist group here will be on his side. Even Lian Po and Li Mu, generals who hold military powers in their hands dare not step too much on his toes. Shaolong now you’re a thorn in his flesh, so you must be careful all the way or else you will die any time.”

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, “What is the Warrior Association?”

Tao Fang replied, “It’s a place which specializes in training professional warriors. The Zhao Warrior Association’s leader is Zhao Ba and he’s extremely highly skilled. You have to be careful when you meet him, he is very powerful in Handan!”

All of them discussed the finer details a little more before

Xiang Shaolong returned to his Hidden Dragon Abode.

Tao Fang accompanied him as he walked, "Our men went to the valley you described at Mulberry Village. The house is still there but they've waited until now and there's still no sight of Mei Canniang. But don't you worry! I'm trying my best to find her."

Now Xiang Shaolong has another thing to worry about. It's been more than a year since he came to this era and he's falling deeper both in terms of relationships and feelings. Sadness and happiness came at him alternatively, making the 21st century moving further away from him.

Sometimes it's difficult to differentiate, between these two eras, which seems more like a dream. Or maybe life is just a big dream. Time is just an illusion, and the time machine is something that allows one to experience different illusions. Maybe even Crazy ma, who invented the time machine, has no answers to such confusing questions.

Tao Fang said, "I've arranged for those two friends of yours to stay at the courtyard next to your Hidden Dragon Abode. Heh! Jing Jun and Teng Yi are the exact opposites, his eyes gleamed when he sees beauties whereas Teng Yi has no interest in them at all, how strange!"

Hidden Dragon Abode was just ahead so Xiang Shaolong stopped and summarized to Tao Fang the tragic fate that befell Teng Yi before he parted ways with Tao Fang and went to see Teng and Jing.

Jing Jun was hugging a pretty maid and enjoying himself but

when he saw Xiang Shaolong he was startled and jumped up, looking a little lost.

Xiang Shaolong laughed, "Enjoy all you want! No need to bother about me!"

And he went into the inner hall to look for Teng Yi.

Teng Yi was sitting quietly alone on the rug in deep thought, and might be thinking of his dead wife and family again. Xiang Shaolong sat next to him and explained to him the current situation.

Teng Yi replied after listening, "If there are 2000 death warriors, it won't be a problem to break out of the city, but it'll be more difficult to deal with pursuing soldiers. If possible, I'd like to personally train these 2000 people."

Xiang Shaolong thought about it for a while before replying, "Let me discuss this with Wu Zhuo."

Teng Yi said, "Just say I'll be his assistant! When it comes to military and wars, I once spent a lot of effort researching old and new military tactics. When I was a commander in the past, I've spent long periods fighting the Qins and Weis, so I have some insight and experience in this."

Xiang Shaolong knows that this person is not one who boasts so if he can say this out, he must be very confident. He said happily, "Then we should not delay! We'll go and discuss this with Wu Zhuo immediately."

Teng Yi greatly admires Xiang Shaolong's way of putting action to words and gladly agreed. Xiang Shaolong brought

him to meet Wu Zhuo and the two of them hit it off immediately, having discussions about military and battles and both lamenting that they should have got to know each other earlier.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly glad and afraid that Wu Tingfang would blame him for ignoring her. He left the two to their talk and left on his own. Lady Ni's death re-ignited the hatred he felt towards Zhao Mu and at the same time he learnt the importance of striking first. The most important task at hand is to make connection with Ying Zheng and after that it will be the time to escape from Handan. Once he thought of this, he can't help but start to miss Mei Canniang.

Heaven has already been very cruel to him, and he hopes that nothing unfortunate will happen to her. He should also learn to control himself, unless he really have the ability to protect the women he loves, or else he really shouldn't involve himself in more relationships. For those who knows Xiang Shaolong very well, they would know that this change in his thoughts can be quite unbelievable.

CHAPTER 10
Each Executing Own Strategies
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG stepped into the main hall of Hidden Dragon Abode and Wu Tingfang, Ting Fangshi together with the four maids were kneeling along the door to welcome him according to the procedures required of a wife and concubine to welcome the return of a long absent husband.

He did not expect Wu Tingfang to be so obedient and was feeling quite lost because he's not quite sure what he's supposed to do according to procedure. Wu Tingfang smilingly invited him to be seated at the main chair and

personally helped to remove his clothes together with Ting Fangshi while the four maids happily went to the bathing pool behind to prepare hot water for him.

As Xiang Shaolong was enjoying the warm family atmosphere, he can't help but think of the ill-fated Lady Ni. Especially when he was soaking in the pool, he remembered how he frolicked in the water with this alluring beauty right before he left.

Wu Tingfang is a lot more mature and voluptuous now, and more understanding as well. Not only did she not blame him for being moody, she even attended to him meticulously together with Ting Fangshi, using their pretty bodies to sooth his seriously injured heart.

In his daze, together with the fatigue from a long travel, Xiang Shaolong did not even know how he got onto the bed and when he woke up, it's already deep into the night.

On the huge bed, beneath the warm blanket, there was only the flimsily clad Wu Tingfang hugging him tightly, sleeping sweetly.

Once Xiang Shaolong moved, she woke up immediately; obviously her concentration is totally upon her beloved.

Wu Tingfang asked gently, "Hungry? You haven't had dinner yet!"

Xiang Shaolong hugged her tightly, "With you in my arms, everything else is forgotten."

Wu Tingfang exclaimed happily, "It's so good that you're

back. Without you, everything lost its interest and meaning. Fang'er did not want to ride horses, play archery, nothing at all, but everyday I'll be counting the days when you'll be back. I never thought that pining for a person could be so painful!"

"After Sister Ya returned, Fang'er went to bother her everyday to tell me about what happened during your journey. Both of us totally idolizes you. I've long said that no one will be able to defeat you."

Xiang Shaolong thought of Lady Ni and felt a stab of pain. He went closer to her ear and whispered, "I'll eat my obedient Fang'er first before eating my late dinner, all right?"

Wu Tingfang exclaimed, "Of course! I've been waiting for your loving for so long that my neck is growing long from the wait."

Early the next morning Master Wu sent someone to ask him and Wu Tingfang to join him for breakfast.

Xiang Shaolong hugged Ting Fangshi and cuddled with her for a short while, then kissed the four maids who had been 'painfully waiting' for him before hurrying to the main residence with the recently 'nourished' and exuberant Wu Tingfang.

Once Wu Tingfang saw her grandfather, she expertly used her wiles and mischievous behavior to make him so happy that he was grinning from ear to ear.

During the meal Master Wu told Xiang Shaolong, "After Wu

Zhuo returned he gave me a detailed report of Shaolong's trip to Wei. I am very pleased with what I heard. Shaolong not only are you more intelligent than others, you're also brave and heroic. It really is Fang'er's good fortune to have you as her husband."

Wu Tingfang saw how her usually picky grandfather was complimenting her husband and was so happy she can't help but smile sweetly.

Just as Xiang Shaolong was expressing his modesty embarrassingly, Master Wu said, "We'll choose a time within these two days to hold a secret wedding between you and Tingfang. That Ting Fangshi will become your concubine, does Shaolong have any objections?"

Xiang Shaolong rose to bow and offer his thanks while Wu Tingfang lowered her pretty face in bashfulness and joy.

After he returned to his seat, Master Wu continued, "Whether we succeed or fail, Zhao Ya is the key point. Only through her will it be possible for you to get in touch with Ying Zheng and his mother. Luckily she is enamored with you. So Shaolong should make use of this relationship well."

Wu Tingfang pouted, "Grandfather! Sister Ya and Shaolong are truly in love with each other."

Master Wu sighed, "Little girl! What do you know?"

Xiang Shaolong has no wish to argue with him over this, and he can't really blame him for this thought because Zhao Ya's reputation is really too horrible. No one will believe that she

will remain true to one person, and even he himself is not totally confident.

Master Wu said, "Last night Guo Zhong sent a messenger over to invite Shaolong to his residence tonight for a feast to celebrate the success of stealing 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual'. The other invited guests are Zhao Mu, the Juzi from Zhao Mohism Yan Ping and the person I mentioned to you yesterday, Zhao Ba from the Zhao Warrior Association. With such an arrangement, I'm afraid it's not going to be something so simple as a celebratory feast."

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows on hearing that and asked, "Can I bring some men along?"

Master Wu replied, "Of course you can! Now that you are our Wu family's Grandson-in-law, and has made great military contributions, your status is different from the past. How can you not have some family warriors following you?"

Xiang Shaolong thought for a moment before asking, "There's one matter which Shaolong is unable to figure out. King Xiaocheng and Zhao Mu all have the family name Zhao, do they have any blood relations with each other, but why is it they can mess everything up, and even have marriages between those of the same family name?"

Master Wu looked at him in surprise, "You're confusing me instead. People from the wild mountains like you have never placed much consideration on marriages between blood relatives, so why are you so particular about this matter?"

Only now did Xiang Shaolong remember his 'real

background' and he pulled off a nonsensical reply, "I'm just perplexed that the royalty would learn from us as well."

Master Wu would never imagine that he came from another dimension, and even if Xiang Shaolong told the truth, he would not have believed him. He explained, "There are two groups of people with the family name Zhao. One of the groups is really from the Zhao family tribe. But after so many generations, the blood relations has been thinned greatly so everyone ignores it with some even encouraging marriages within the same family name. The other group are those bestowed the family name 'Zhao' by the King, and Zhao Mu is one of the examples."

Xiang Shaolong nodded his head in understanding.

Master Wu said, "There are two people whom Shaolong must be on guard against, and they're Prince Xinling from Wei and Tian Dan from Qi. These two people are extremely formidable and have a lot of expert fighters under them. You've stolen the 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual' and killed Xiao Weimou, they will definitely not let you off. Unless they decide not to strike but if they do, it will certainly be after much planning and consideration and their strategy will be astounding, it's not going to be something easy to deal with."

Xiang Shaolong raised his brows as he replied, "Shaolong is already mentally prepared. Grandfather please rest assured!"

Master Wu raised his head heavenward and chortled as he

reached out his hand to pat his shoulder, saying, "Good! That is my good grandson-in-law."

Knowing oneself and one's enemy well is the key to winning a hundred battles.

Even in the 21st century, gathering information is the most important task. It's just that during that time they can rely on satellites, but here they have to rely on people's ears and eyes.

Because of this Xiang Shaolong had a discussion with Tao Fang to decide how to find out what Zhao Mu's strategy against them is. They also extended their spying network to Guo Zhong, Zhao Ba, Yan Ping as well as Zhao Mu's two lackeys, the Physician Guo Kai and General Yue Cheng etc. After that he went with Wu Tingfang to Lady Ya's residence situated outside the Palace.

Teng Yi and Jing Jun became his personal bodyguards. Once he steps out of the house, they will follow him like a shadow.

Wu Zhuo also chose another 10 excellent fighters to be his followers. All these people went to Wei with him so they have already established strong ties with him. Therefore they can naturally work well with one another.

The streets of Handan is livelier and more crowded as well. Looking at the dressing and hearing the accents, a lot of them were traders from other places. Obviously Zhao is now slowly recovering after it's serious defeat at Changping.

Xiang Shaolong and Wu Tingfang rode alongside each other,

followed by Teng Yi and Jing Jun with the Wu family soldiers following right at the end and everyone on the streets turned to look at them.

He can't help but feel a surge of emotions.

Thinking back on the day he just arrived in Handan, he couldn't even protect Ting Fangshi then and can't help but have mixed feelings about this.

But all these in front of him, is like a sandcastle built on a beach. One large wave is all it takes for everything to disappear without a trace.

In fact the whole country can use this analogy as well.

Again he felt as if this is a big dream.

Why does life always feel like a dream?

Only during special moments, for example when fighting a battle or when enjoying himself like last night with Wu Tingfang can he clearly feel the presence of life.

No matter how he was thrown into this era, it's difficult for him to feel for what is happening in front of him like the others. Because after all he is from another era, with 2000 more years of experience, that's why he can see more clearly, more deeply and more objectively than any scholar of this era.

Wu Tingfang kept throwing sweet and beguiling smiles at him and soon, they were entering Lady Ya's residence.

Zhao Ya received them in the main hall.

Xiang Shaolong specially introduced Teng Yi and Jing Jun to her and said quietly, "Jing Jun is very good in stealth work at night, going over walls and into houses easily. If there is anything urgent I want to inform you, I will tell him to look for you."

After settling on some simple communication signals, Lady Ya smiled smugly, "Qian'er is waiting for you inside."

Xiang Shaolong was overjoyed and curious at the same time, "King Xiaocheng really agreed to your request?"

Lady Ya led him and Wu Tingfang into the inner hall while Teng and Jing remained in the outer hall. As they walked, she explained, "I gave Imperial brother a proposal, saying that I want to teach Qian'er the secrets to enticing men so that when she becomes the concubine of another state, she can also make use of her natural beauty to push things that are beneficial to our Great Zhao. Imperial brother is not a person with a mind of his own so after I pointed out to him the advantages to it, he agreed."

Xiang Shaolong secretly admired Zhao Ya for her quick and tactical ideas. He reached out and hugged her slender waist, tapped her buttocks lightly twice and said, "So Zhao Mu's family name is not originally Zhao, I wonder who is he and what is his background?"

Zhao Ya replied, "No one in Handan dares to mention this, because Zhao Mu will go to unscrupulous lengths to deal with those who pursue his background. When he came to Zhao he was only 14 years old, and was introduced by an

attendant. Because Zhao Mu's swordsmanship was excellent and was obedient, and at the same time he has the same habit of liking men like Imperial brother so very quickly he won the heart of Imperial brother. At that time Imperial brother has not yet ascended the throne but because of their close relationship, even we could not say anything. I just did not expect that now that Zhao Ni's death is so full of loopholes, Imperial brother still allowed Zhao Mu to cover everything up. Now everyone in the palace has given up on Imperial brother, but what's the use of that?"

Xiang Shaolong forced himself not to think of Lady Ni and asked calmly, "Is the attendant who brought him in still around?"

Zhao Ya replied, "Not long after Imperial brother ascended the throne, that attendant was found to have lost his footing, fell into a well and drowned by someone. At that time we did not suspect anything at all but now that you're asking about it, I think this person is killed by Zhao Mu to prevent him from revealing the secret of his background."

Xiang Shaolong asked, "Is that attendant from Zhao?"

Lady Ya thought for a moment before replying, "I'm not sure, but it's not difficult to find out."

Xiang Shaolong reminded her, "This investigation must be done secretly."

Lady Ya pouted, "All right! Do I still need you to tell me that?"

Xiang Shaolong was about to speak further when Zhao Qian ran into his arms like a fragrant breeze, her delicate body trembling and using all the strength she has to hug him tightly.

Wu Tingfang laughed, "Third Princess, so you're equally enamored of him as well!"

Zhao Qian left Xiang Shaolong's safe embrace embarrassingly and holding Wu Tingfang's tiny hand, led her towards Lady Ya's tranquil little building. The two girls chattering non-stop, behaving very closely towards each other.

The four of them went to the small building and drinking the fragrant tea served by Xiao Zhao and the rest, enjoying the nice morning weather.

The large garden outside the building has turned into a silvery white world, with snowy petals on the trees.

Xiang Shaolong told Wu Tingfang and Zhao Qian, "My two obedient lasses, the garden is so pretty, why don't you take a walk downstairs?"

Naturally the two ladies will listen to his every command and knowing that he has business to discuss with Lady Ya, they obediently went down to admire the snowy scene in the garden.

Only now did Xiang Shaolong tell Lady Ya about Ying Zheng.

Lady Ya took a long look at him before saying, "Xiang Lang, don't blame Ya'er for being curious, but it seems that when

you first came to Handan, you were already very interested in Ying Zheng. At that time you should not have known about the relationship between the Wu family and Lu Buwei yet, so how did you have such foresight?"

Xiang Shaolong was dumbfounded because with Zhao Ya's intelligence, no matter how he tries to explain it will still sound inappropriate. Because with his status at that time, he shouldn't even be aware of the existence of Ying Zheng.

Lady Ya went into his arms and continued, "No matter what secrets you have, Ya'er doesn't care as long as you love me."

Xiang Shaolong was touched and after kissing her fragrant lips, said, "Is there a way to arrange a meeting between me and Ying Zheng."

Lady Ya sighed, "It's no problem at all arranging for both of you to meet, at the most I'll sacrifice myself a little. The problem is there's no way this can be hidden from Zhao Mu. Besides, seeing Ying Zheng may hinder things instead. This person is engrossed with wine and beauty all day long. He's not much difference from a bum. He also believes that Zhao Mu is his benefactor and friend and worst, he may reveal your secrets to Zhao Mu. That would be terrible!"

Is Ying Zheng really such a person?

Xiang Shaolong felt a problem coming on and asked, "What about his mother Zhu Ji?"

Lady Ya replied, "She is a very smart and formidable woman, and is about 30 old years old now but she doesn't look that

much older than me at all. She's really a rare beauty and Zhao Mu and her already started a relationship long ago. However I think she's only with Zhao Mu for survival. This woman is extremely ambitious and will never be loyal to anyone, including Lu Buwei."

Xiang Shaolong had an idea and said, "This would be much easier, I will work on this woman."

He secretly thought that as long as she is ambitious, she will not be satisfied staying in Handan as a hostage, then he will have a chance.

He won't even mind if he has to sacrifice his body a little.

In order to strike against Zhao Mu, he is willing to use any methods available.

When he returned to the Wu residence and just after lunch, Lady Ya's family warrior arrived to look for him, telling him to go to her residence immediately with the specific instructions not to bring Wu Tingfang along.

Xiang Shaolong felt goose bumps rising, and was totally perplexed. After bidding his farewell to Wu Tingfang and Ting Fangshi, he hurried to her residence with with Teng Yi and Jing Jun.

Zhao Ya stopped them in the main hall and with a somber expression, said, "Empress Jing is here."

She continued with gritted teeth, "That conniving thief Zhao Mu really will not let you off even a little."

Xiang Shaolong's heart sank, "It seems like I will have to enter the palace and seek King Xiaocheng's forgiveness."

He did not expect that he can't even delay this for half a day.

Lady Ya said, "The situation may not be that bad yet, Empress Jing wants to see you personally!"

She continued with a giggle, "A handsome looking man indeed will have some advantages."

Xiang Shaolong smiled bitterly and went into the inner hall to meet Empress Jing.

Empress Jing stood in front of the window with her back facing him and after dismissing her maids, said icily, "Xiang Shaolong you're really bold! Are you not afraid of death? You dare to even despoil third Princess's virginal body!"

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that he has to put on a convincing act so he knelt down and said, "Shaolong is true towards Princess, and has no intention of toying with her. I hope Empress Jing will try to understand what happened."

Empress Jing turned around, her eyes furious but her expression cold as ice as she said, "I don't care if you're really in love. If his Majesty were to find out, he will surely think that you brought third Princess back to Handan because of your own selfish desires. Besides, stealing what you're supposed to protect is akin to the crime of lying to the ruler, even his Majesty won't be able to find an excuse to let you off. It seems that even now you do not realize how serious this is, and to think that I thought so well of you."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that something is not right. Looking at her expression and tone of voice, it's nothing as simple as blackmailing him with this matter to have an affair with her. He has really underestimated her. He remembered Lady Pingyuan once said hers is one of the political marriages arranged for the unification of the three states, and she was a Han beauty who married into Zhao. He suddenly had an idea and immediately said, "Shaolong knows he's made a mistake, Empress Jing save me!"

Empress Jing's icy facade softened a little and she sighed, "Xiang Shaolong! Stand up!"

Xiang Shaolong stood up and stayed there, not moving.

Empress Jing turned around again, looking at the wintry forest outside the window and said slowly, "What should I do about this? If I hide it for you, it will be found out sooner or later and by then even I will be implicated. If the Weis were to immediately come and bring third Princess back, what do you think will be the outcome?"

Xiang Shaolong emboldened himself and walked to Empress Jing's back, saying gently, "Don't worry Empress Jing, the King of Wei already had the intention of going back on the agreement. Besides Zhao Mu will try to disrupt this as well so this wedding agreement will certainly drag on. After six months to a year, even if third Princess is going to marry, Empress Jing can just push all the blame away."

The Empress was silent for a moment before saying quietly, "I'm risking my life to hide this secret for the both of you, so

how will it benefit me?"

Xiang Shaolong thought that here comes the chance and said determinedly, "If Empress Jing were to have any instructions, Xiang Shaolong will go through hell and fire, risking my life to accomplish it for you."

Empress Jing still have not turned around but she said calmly, "Then kill a person for me!"

Xiang Shaolong moved closer, his body pressing against her back as his arms reached out to encircle her tiny waist tightly and nibbling at her ear, asked "Is Zhao Mu the person Empress Jing want to kill?"

Empress Jing's delicate body trembled as she leaned into his arms, "Dueling with a smart person like you really saves a lot of time talking. As long as Zhao Mu remains alive, there is no hope at all for the state of Zhao and my position as Empress is just an empty title, do you understand?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "I understand! There's another person, right?"

The other person would naturally be King Xiaocheng because once Zhao Mu and King Xiaocheng are killed, Empress Jing's son will ascend the throne and Empress Jing's status will raise to become the Dowager. Since her son is still young, power will naturally land in her hands. Who will care by that time whether Zhao Qian is still a virgin or not?

In order to gain power, people in this era are all vicious. Wives killing husbands, sons killing fathers, everything is

done in the extreme.

Although Empress Jing's body softened with his hug, her mind was still sharp and she said quietly, "You are the one who said it. The person I want to deal with is only Zhao Mu. Ai! It's not that his Majesty does not want to give you opportunities, but you're now part of the Wu family and Wu Yingyuan is secretly on close relations with the Qins. So sooner or later they'll get into trouble and have the whole clan exterminated. But if you get rid of Zhao Mu, maybe I can protect you, or maybe even give you better opportunities."

Xiang Shaolong turned her body around, hugging her closely to his body. How can Empress Jing stand all these, her face blushed like fire, her breathing rapid, lust filling her.

Xiang Shaolong kissed her heavily on her lips, his hands greedily investigating the restricted areas.

Firstly it's because of her high and regal status, secondly it's because her body is voluptuous and alluring, thirdly it's because of her flirtatious behavior after her passion was flamed, which made Xiang Shaolong turn reel into real, and enjoy to his heart's content.

Empress Jing used all her willpower and remaining strength to grab his disobedient hands, left his attacking lips and panted coquettishly as she said, "I never say what I don't mean. Within three days, I want you to give me a satisfactory proposal, all right?"

The last sentence was filled with soft pleading, as if she has

developed feelings for Xiang Shaolong.

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that this woman is so formidable she resembles Lady Pingyuan a little. He has to show her how beneficial he is to her, only then can they work happily together. He kissed her face and said, "There's no need for three days, I can give you an answer now."

He paused and continued, "To deal with Zhao Mu, there's only two ways, by wit or strength. By strength, the plan is naturally to assassinate him; by wit we will check out his background and then lay a trap for him. From what I guess, he must be a spy sent by another state to try and bring down our Great Zhao's political situation from the inside. Or else if he has any love at all for Zhao, he wouldn't have done what he has been doing."

Empress Jing's eyes lighted up and looked at him intently, "You're not simple at all. But remember, you'll have to be swift and vicious when dealing with Zhao Mu, or else you will end up falling in his trap instead and you'll never be able to pick yourself up again."

A strong hatred gleamed in Xiang Shaolong's eyes as he said through gritted teeth, "Just the tragic death of Lady Ni is enough to make us stand on opposing ends, so Empress Jing need not worry."

Empress Jing voluntarily kissed him and said, "Shaolong! I have to go. Remember you must not look for me as you will, I will make contact with you instead."

Even after she disappeared around the door, Xiang Shaolong

still did not feel relieved at all. On seeing that this woman did not ask to have immediate fun with him, he knows that she can readily control her lusts. This type of woman is the most fearsome and anytime she can turn around and point the gun at him while he is only a useful tool in her hand!

Xiang Shaolong hugged Zhao Qian tightly and reassured her, "Everything's fine now!"

Zhao Qian asked worriedly, "I really do not need to fear anything? If Qian'er has caused you trouble, I can only..."

Xiang Shaolong reached out and covered her tiny mouth, and told Zhao Ya, "You must keep a good watch over Zhao Qian. I will send Jing Jun to lead a few good fighters to pretend to be your family warriors. If it comes to the critical juncture we will be forced to strike."

Lady Ya said, "Please don't do that! In Handan I still have enough power to protect myself and Qian'er. Besides Imperial brother holds me in very high regard now."

She then pulled Xiang Shaolong aside and said quietly, "You asked me to check on that attendant who brought Zhao Mu in, and there's now some headway. According to an old palace maid, that attendant called He Dan is from the state of Chu and was doted on and trusted by the late King. But what is the use of this news?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "Right now I don't know of what use it can be. But Zhao Mu may possibly be a spy sent by the Chus, and his task is to ensure that the three states will never be unified."

Lady Ya nodded and said, "This guess is very reasonable, and also explains why Zhao Mu is linked with Xiao Weimou. Because what Zhao Mu represents is the common benefits for Chu and Qi, both do not want to see the unification of the three states."

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows as he thought, "But even if we know this, for now it's difficult to use this information to deal a blow to Zhao Mu."

Lady Ya laughed, "Leave this to me, don't forget I'm an expert in forgery. As long as I have a little information, I will be able to forge secret letters from the Chus to Zhao Mu. And even more delicately make it land in Imperial brother's hands while Empress Jing and I will fan the flames at the side. Zhao Mu will be in for a hard time then."

Xiang Shaolong happily hugged and kissed her a few times, "I will ask Tao Fang to keep an eye on any Chus who comes into contact with Zhao Mu, if we can find real proof, that would be ideal."

After having some fun with Lady Ya and Zhao Qian, Xiang Shaolong returned to the Wu family stockade and he had just stepped through the door when the guards told him, "The Juzi Mister Yan Ping came to look for you, Eldest Young Master is now attending to him."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that something is wrong, so he braced himself and went to Wu Yingyuan's residence to meet him.

Wu Yingyuan saw that he has returned and made an excuse

to leave, leaving the two of them sitting opposite each other in the hall.

Yan Ping said with a wooden expression, "Brother Xiang has shown off your capabilities in Wei, making everyone look at you differently, but it has also thrown you into a dangerous situation. I'm sure Brother Xiang knows about it!"

Xiang Shaolong was a little impressed by his straightforwardness and honesty, but because of Yuan Zong's matter, it's difficult for him to work with this person. He sighed and said, "Only idiots will not stir up feelings of jealousy, this is unavoidable."

Yan Ping repeated the phrase 'Only idiots will not stir up feelings of jealousy' twice and was impressed, "Brother Xiang's words are indeed profound, my apologies!"

His eyes then turned sharp as he stared at him and said, "No wonder Yuan Zong is willing to hand you the Juzi token."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, naturally it must be Zhao Mu who told the Chus. From this he can deduce that Zhao Mu indeed has close connections with the Chus, that's why the Chus can get hold of the latest news.

Yan Ping said, "This Juzi token is of no use at all to outsiders, and will cause trouble instead. If Brother Xiang can give it to me, I will surely repay you."

Xiang Shaolong really had this urge to just give the Juzi token to him to avoid adding more trouble in future. But Yuan Zong would rather die than hand the token to Yan Ping, and

he must have his reason for doing so. Yuan Zong also sacrificed himself so that he can escape to Handan safely so no matter what he cannot let him down. So although by doing so it will only be beneficial to him, he still persevered.

He smiled and said, "Even if the Juzi token is not on Brother Yuan, maybe he hid it or maybe he gave it to someone else, why are you so sure the token is with me?"

Yan Ping replied unhappily, "That means Brother Xiang is refusing to hand the token over. This is such an unintelligent move, now there are many people in Handan who wants to see Brother Xiang dead and if I help them, would Brother Xiang be able to handle it?"

Xiang Shaolong laughed icily, "You should be responsible for Brother Yuan's death, I have not settled this score with you and yet you dare to threaten me."

Yan Ping stood up suddenly and said calmly, "Fine! Xiang Shaolong! You're brave. If you can reach the Guo residence safely tonight, then let me try you out on your Mohist swordplay!"

He laughed loudly thrice and left like the wind.

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that others have threatened him since he was young so he's not afraid of such threats at all. He left to look for Teng Yi and Wu Zhuo.

CHAPTER 11
The Three Major Killer Strikes
[Translated by JEAN]

YUAN ZONG is really dead! A wave of sadness coursed through Xiang Shaolong. He thought of his desolate times in Wu An. Yuan Zong not only provided him with food and lodging, but also taught him Mohist Swordplay. Those three months he spent with him gave him the ability to survive in this messy time. He's really indebted to him. If he did not know that Yan Ping caused the death of Yuan Zong, he would not have made enemies with this Juzi from Zhao Mohism. Although he gained a few hundred more fearsome opponents because of this, his heart is still glad.

He laid on a bed and enjoyed the after bath massage given to him by Chunying and the other three maids, trying to relax himself so that he can deal with the continuous battles tonight. This is a lawless world where the strong will survive. Or else he would have made a police report and request for bodyguards. He toyed with the square token with the single word 'Mo' in his hand, the Juzi Token, and felt it's strange icyness.

Those traitorous Mohists Yan Ping and Fu Du, why are they going to all lengths to get this token? The two issues of Yuan Zong not having the Juzi token on him and the night attack at Prince Xinling's residence by the Chu Mohism, it must be because that conniving thief Zhao Mu who informed Yan Ping so that he can come cause trouble with him. This person is really extremely vicious, just a few words from him is enough to throw him into danger. He studied the token in his hand closely.

When he read martial arts novel in the 21st century, they always wrote that whatever token, as long as it's in one's hands, that person will have ultimate power over a sect or group of people and can command them. But obviously this Juzi token has no such power or Yuan Zong can always hold it up and there'll be no need to run for his life. Therefore this Juzi token must have some other more substantial value, and not something so simple as a symbol of the Juzi status.

But if that's the case, why didn't Yuan Zong tell him. Or could it be he has not found out the secret himself, so he did not reveal it since he's doubtful as well? At this time Wu

Tingfang and Ting Fangshi walked laughingly towards the pool and sat down next to him. Two more pairs of delicate hands joined to massage his muscles. He was so comfortable he closed his eyes, but his fingers were still rubbing the Juzi token.

When he touched that word ‘Mo’, the two upper dots of the character seemed to have undiscernibly rotated a little and he opened his eyes to take a closer look in shock. He used his thumb to rub harder but the two protruding dots did not move at all. He quietly sighed and was about to give up when he suddenly thought that if it’s so easy to find out the secret to the Juzi token, Yuan Zong would have found it long ago. So he concentrated on his study again.

Wu Tingfang was laughing at that side, “Xiang Lang! What treasure is this, you’re looking at it more intently than when you look at us!”

While Ting Fangshi commented, “That thing is so exquisite!”

Xiang Shaolong just replied with a smile and used his fingertips to push hard on those two round dots but there is still not reaction at all.

Wu Tingfang was feeling mischievous so she leaned over and gently bit his ear and pulled it. Xiang Shaolong was so comfortable he moaned and was about to put the Juzi token and deal with her when he suddenly had an idea. If pushing it down is useless, what about pulling it up? So he instructed Chunying to get him a small plier, pinched one of the round dots and pulled up with his might. There was a ‘tak’ sound

and the round dot rose up almost half an inch from the token. Xiang Shaolong was immediately energized and sat up.

The women all crowed around him in puzzlement and all of them joined in to study the token in his hand. Xiang Shaolong pulled up the other dot and now it looks as if there are two round pillars protruding on the 'Mo' word. He can't help but feel nervous and tried to turn the little pillar clockwise and it really turned, making another sound which sounded like a lock being opened. The women all tittered in amazement.

Wu Tingfang grabbed his arms and said, "Something is hidden inside. Xiang Lang, turn the other one quickly."

Xiang Shaolong took a deep breath, suppressed his nervous feeling and turned the other tiny pillar. He tried but it did not move. However, when he turned it anti-clockwise, something strange happened. There was a 'tak' sound and the Juzi token separated, revealing a tiny rolled brocade parchment of about five inches inside. The women cheered. Xiang Shaolong was utterly shocked and knows that he finally found the secret to this Juzi token by sheer luck.

He opened the tiny scroll on the bed, and it's about 20 feet long, filled tightly with diagrams and tiny words. The first half is the upper volume 'Mohism Military Tactics', the lower volume on the second half are all sword strokes. At the beginning of the scroll it's written 'Mohist Swordplay's addendum of the three major killer strikes'. Xiang Shaolong

was extremely interested and upon a closer read, he was secretly ecstatic. It turns out that these three major killer strikes are all offensive sword moves, a great contradict to the idea of mainly defense in the Mohist swordplay. He wonders if it's because Mo Yu had a change of heart in his later years and created these three offensive moves to supplement the inadequacies of the swordplay.

Although it's named three strikes, but each strike there are at least a hundred odd diagrams, so obviously it's an extremely complicated move. The most intricate thing is these three stokes are all related to defense, so it can be used seamlessly with the Mohist Swordplay Yuan Zong taught him.

The first stroke is named 'Defending Instead of Attacking'. Those lifelike human drawings were drawn sitting, walking, holding swords, jumping and rolling, and in all kinds of positions. Each picture is accompanied by detailed instructions and ways of using it. Each word is marvelously written and clear, making one feels extremely awe for this person Mo Yu's intelligence.

The second stroke is named 'Attacking Instead Of Defending'. If the first stroke is akin to stability like the mountains, this second stroke is like shocking waves that can split the shores, with unfathomable strength. Just these two strokes alone is enough to contain the essence of attacking and defending in swordplay. When matched with the Mohist swordplay, the power in increased many fold.

The third stroke is named 'Attacking And Defending Concurrently'. Its changes are even more complex but it's not the merger of the other two strokes, but an extremely mysterious swordplay. Not only are there defenses in the attacks, there are also attacks in the defenses, and the most formidable part is that it is ever changing. At anytime it can change from attack to defense or vice versa, making Xiang Shaolong totally inebriated while looking at it.

For now there's no need for him to study the military tactics in the scroll, so he picked up his wooden sword and went to the courtyard, concentrating on studying and practicing these three sword strokes. The women all sat in the small pavilion in the courtyard, looking at their beloved concentrating as he danced with his sword.

Xiang Shaolong read as he practiced and initially he had to stop and read frequently but when he got used to the moves, every move he made, whether cutting, slashing, piercing or carving, all of it contained the essence of the swordplay. Unconsciously he was absorbed into the mysterious swordplay and forgot about everything else. Such wondrous feeling, it's the first time he tasted it ever since he learnt swordplay from Yuan Zong. The wooden sword seems to suddenly feel so light as he moved according to instructions, making sounds as it sliced thru the air, becoming the howl of a hero, increasing the formidable aura enough to make others afraid.

He combined it with the original Mohist swordplay and practiced again and for a moment the sword aura was

everywhere, at times quiet and at times moving. When quiet it feels like the calm sea, but when moving it feels like angry waves, the changes unfathomable. The women were all intoxicated by the sight, only feeling that Xiang Shaolong's every pose is extremely exquisite, every move showing the extreme capability of a human body, both quiet and exciting, forming into an earth shattering aura.

Time flies, and it was only when Teng Yi, Jing Jun and Wu Zhuo came to look for him that Xiang Shaolong realized that he has unconsciously practiced swordplay for six hours. For someone who has never learned Mohist swordplay, he may not even gain any headway with these three strokes even after practicing for three years but for Xiang Shaolong, six hours is enough for him to learn a lot and change into a new person. Xiang Shaolong did not feel tired at all.

He was curious. The strange breathing method of Mo Yu must be related to the mysterious innate ability in humans. If in future he can follow his method of meditation and practice his breathing, the effect may be even more miraculous and he may very well become a martial arts expert like those portrayed in martial arts novels, having mysterious internal energy. After he hurriedly washed up, he went to the hall to meet with Wu Zhuo and the rest.

Teng Yi looked at him in surprise, "Brother Xiang looks energized, like you've changed into another person. Has something worth congratulating happened?"

Wu Zhuo added, "Young Grand Master-in-law's are sharper

than before. It's really astonishing!"

Xiang Shaolong was secretly ecstatic but he changed the topic and said, "How many men can be used right now?"

Wu Zhuo replied, "We have enough men, it's no problem moving 500 to 600 of them. But once we do that, we will reveal the real strength we have and in the long term it's more harmful than beneficial."

Xiang Shaolong was extremely confident, "Why not just the four of us, together with 10 elite fighters you pick, and we'll try it out!"

The three of them were collectively startled, isn't this obvious who will be stronger or weaker?

Xiang Shaolong continued, "If we were to fight head on, we'll definitely lose but now our aim is just to safely reach Guo residence, so it's two different matters."

Jing Jun said, "If I'm the only one, I'm very confident that I will slip into the Guo residence unnoticed."

Wu Zhuo suddenly became excited, "To be able to fight together with Young Grand Master-in-law, is indeed the happiest thing. Come! Let us discuss this."

He took out a painting from the front of his chest, and it turns out to be the street map of Handan.

Wu Zhuo pointed at a small hill in the city and said, "The Guo residence is on this hill, there are only two proper roads towards there, which leads to the front and back courtyards

of the Guo residence. The other areas are either rocky terrain or dense forests.”

Teng Yi added, “As long as we can reach the hill, with the rocks and dense forests as cover, we need not fear them using arrows or long distance projectiles, nor need we fear their bigger numbers.”

Wu Zhuo said, “The problem is that they will certainly send men to keep an eye on us then they will be able to choose any point in the mile long journey to attack and kill us.”

Xiang Shaolong thought hard for a moment before saying, “We can use the tactic of ‘Openly repairing the road while sneaking to Chen Cang’ ...”

Looking at them looking at him in bewilderment, he remembered that the story of Chen Cang happened during the Chu-Han contention, so naturally they have never heard of it. He hurriedly changed his words, “Wu Zhuo you can send out three horse carriages at the same time, traveling towards three different directions. Those Mohists will certainly have to go after all the carriages and by the time they realize there’s no one in the carriages, their strength is already divided. Only then will we set off, throwing them into disarray.”

The three of them thought that this plan is workable on hearing it.

Jing Jun commented, “We can use ropes and hooks to climb over family residences, and those following us will certainly be caught unprepared and not know what to do!”

The more they talk the more excited they became, as if they have already won the battle. In the end Xiang Shaolong said, "If I am Yan Ping, I will definitely leave my men at the bottom of the hill where the Guo residence is. By then we can make use of the dense forest and have a good fight with them."

Teng Yi's expression changed, "Why don't Jing Jun and I slip there first and lay some traps, then we'll be even more confident."

Jing Jun loves making trouble and he jumped up, "No time to lose, there's still four more hours to the feast. We will bring our equipment there immediately and start making traps."

Wu Zhuo stood up and said excitedly, "What do you need, I can provide everything."

After the three of them left, Xiang Shaolong went back to his bedroom and took out his equipment and the belt filled with his flying needles and secured them around his body before kissing his wives and maids farewell and hurrying to meet with Wu Zhuo. On the way he saw a very happy looking Tao Fang. Tao Fang pulled him aside and said, "We're really lucky, we found out about a mysterious person who just happened to meet Zhao Mu today and from his accent he's definitely a Chu."

Xiang Shaolong asked happily, "Has he been captured?"

Tao Fang replied, "He's still in the city. If we try to capture him we may alert the others. According to our spy's investigations, he booked the room at the inn until

tomorrow morning. As soon as he steps out of Handan, we'll capture him alive and imprison him at our pasture. I don't believe his mouth can be as stubborn as our torture equipment."

Xiang Shaolong put his arms around Tao Fang's shoulders and chortled as they walked out, "If we can get proof of that conniving thief's nefarious schemes, we'll make sure he'll get his just desserts."

At this time the two of them reached the large open space behind the main door where Wu Zhuo has prepared three horse carriages and was waiting for his instructions. Tao Fang asked quizzically, "There's only one of you, why do you need three horse carriages?"

Xiang Shaolong laughed, "The three horse carriages are all not for me, but a gift to that short lived Yan Ping!"

As he chortled, he let go of Tao Fang and left.

VOLUME 5

CHAPTER 1 The Dinner Feast At Guo Residence [Translated by JEAN]

TINY SNOWFLAKES filled the sky, the weather bitterly cold. Luckily there were no gusts of wind or it'll feel even more terrible.

Wu Zhuo, Xiang Shaolong and over 10 odd men on horses left the residence hurriedly. All of them were wearing bamboo hats that covered most of their faces. Once they reached the streets they split ways immediately, two to a group, all traveling towards different directions. Firstly it's the three horse carriages to trick the enemy. Even if Yan Ping's 300 men are all waiting outside the residence, it's difficult for them to follow so many 'suspicious characters' at the same time. Besides who can be certain whether Xiang Shaolong is one of them.

This move is to force Yan Ping's Mohist warriors to retreat to the Guo's residence where the dense forest and the road leading up the hill is. Xiang Shaolong and Wu Zhuo traveled a well planned route and swiftly left the forested area outside the Wu residence and arrived at the side of the main road where other common residences are. They did not travel towards the Guo residence but instead turned left in the opposite direction in spite of the snow. They did not care if they were being followed and when they reached the front of a large house, they gave the secret signal.

The door to the house immediately opened. The owner of this big house is someone who has strong relations with the Wu residence and naturally he was glad to assist them. The two of them did not say anything at all but just entered the house and went to the back alley from the building backdoor. Only then did they hurriedly ride towards Xiuyue Hill where the Guo residence is situated. It was Wu Zhuo who arranged all these so that even if they were being

followed, they can still beautifully shake off the other party.

The snow hit their faces and Xiang Shaolong suddenly felt lost. Although it's only been a few short years since he arrived in this ancient era, but he has experienced many heart-rending tragedies. Shu'er and Su Nu's unjust deaths have given him a huge blow! But Zhao Ni's horrible death is something that he cannot accept even now! But it's another cruel and heartless fact!

Suddenly, these three blossoming beauties will forever disappear from this world and even if he killed Zhao Mu and Prince Shaoyuan, this fact will never change. Now his great benefactor Yuan Zong is confirmed to be dead as well. Hai! What is all these for?

He can be killed at any time as well, and will that be a form of release? Will there be a chance to see them again after he's dead. Ever since the beginning of life, the questions of life and death have always troubled humans. It is only a short journey where one throws oneself into. And a person's existence will not stop when he dies. No one has ever been able to answer or prove this question. Religion's answers, where heaven and hell or anything outside life and death, may very well but just be an optimistic wish. It's something that one cannot do without. If there is only emptiness after death, it's a situation which is very difficult to accept.

Wu Zhuo who was riding next to him called out, "Young Grand Master-in-law! Xiuyue hill is right ahead."

Xiang Shaolong was woken from his reverie and gathered his

thoughts, looking ahead.

By now they have left the residential areas and come to the foot of the hill. There's only one road which leads straight to the top of the hill and at the top ancient trees made up a forest and he could catch peeps of the huge building through the trees, looking extremely majestic. However there are no traces of men in ambush and there's an archway at the foot of the hill, written on it are the words 'Guo Family Residence' but there are no guards there at all.

The two of them turned to the woods at the side of the road and dismounted where Teng and Jing have left markings of the secret signal. The trees and grass were all covered by white snow and the scene looked pure and alluring but it's not advantageous for hiding or escape at all. Wu Zhuo found another carved signal at the foot of another tree and made a hand signal towards Xiang Shaolong first before going into the woods.

Xiang Shaolong put the Mohist sword in the brocade cloth Zhao Qian made for him and strapped it on his back and with his left hand holding his recovered Flying Rainbow, went after Wu Zhuo. Suddenly men and light appeared and surrounded them quietly. Wu Zhuo drew the two metal bars from his back and with a roar charged towards the front suddenly, not allowing the enemy to get a better feel of the surrounding area and strengthen their encirclement.

Xiang Shaolong was still feeling upset about the death of his beloved beauties and Yuan Zong, so he was filled with fury

as he pulled out his wooden sword and held it on his right hand as he followed behind and killed a path towards the woods. Their opponents did not expect them to be so ferocious. Of the two Zhao Mohists who were blocking Wu Zhuo, one of them took a step back in frenzy while the other came charging with his long sword.

There was a 'clang' as the weapons clashed and sparks flew in the darkness. Wu Zhuo took advantage of the fact that his opponent's arm strength is not as good as his so he flicked the long sword away, creating an opening at his enemy's front and made a false move as if to attack another person but the metal bar in his left hand turned back and struck the opening as quick as lightning. That person is quite formidable as well, he moved his sword back to defend and blocked the metal bar but he forgot about the other metal bar on Wu Zhuo's right hand. He only saw a flash while Wu Zhuo bent his waist as the metal bar struck upwards into his opponent's stomach.

That Mohist did not expect the angle of Wu Zhuo's attack to be so precise and with a scream, staggered backwards as fresh blood spilled on the snow and he died immediately. Wu Zhuo did not stop at all as his two metal bars seem to transform into two rays of light as he charged forward towards the other Mohist. The battle has finally started.

All these Mohists were highly skilled but they did not expect that an unknown Wu Zhuo would kill one of their men in such a short time. They were all furious and charged upon him and for a moment the air was filled with a murderous

aura. Xiang Shaolong who was following closely behind Wu Zhuo went into the state of Mohist swordplay, every move his enemy makes is very clear to him. Because their swordplay all came from the same source, he is very familiar with his enemy's attack and could even see their loopholes and inadequacies.

He roared as Flying Rainbow pierced and pricked madly in his left hand while in his right hand the Mohist sword slashed and sliced heavily, his left and right hands actually executing two different styles of fighting and strength, gentle and harsh at the same time. A furious fire burned in his eyes but his expression was cool and calm, as if he's another person altogether, his aura extremely imposing. As the weapons clashed, three Mohists were struck down at the same time, one of them injured by Wu Zhuo's bars while the other two were naturally felled by Xiang Shaolong.

A loud shout came from Xiang Shaolong's right side. A tall and huge Mohist who looks like a higher ranking officer came out from behind a tree, leaning forward and running furiously. Under the torch his metal pole glittered and was aimed towards Xiang Shaolong's heart, the aim accurate, vicious and swift. Xiang Shaolong saw that he revealed no loopholes at all as he moved and knows that he has met an expert in Mohism. He dared not be lax and with his left hand he executed one of the Mohist's three killer strikes 'Defending Instead of Attacking' with Flying Rainbow. He moved his sword back, its tip quivering, where his next attack will be still an unknown as he dealt with the two

Mohist coming towards his left. He executed 'Attacking Instead Of Defending' with the Mohist sword on his right as the sword seemed to turn into a beam of light and curved forward like a swimming snake as it engaged his opponent's metal pole.

The Mohist swordplay is useful as it allows a single person to fight against overpowering numbers so although he was dealing with attacks from two different sides; he was not at all confused. Also it relies on intuition rather than the eyes so that even if one's eyes were covered, he can still fight with the enemy. In such dark surroundings with only a few torches illuminating things at the perimeter, it's even more beneficial to Xiang Shaolong. That Mohist with the pole did not expect Xiang Shaolong to suddenly execute such an exquisite move and only felt his frighteningly strong pole attack which is akin to a dragon bursting out of a cave, upon meeting his opponent's wooden sword, felt like a clay ox entering the water, empty and surreal, without any strength at all.

He was surprised and reflexively pulled his pole back and retreated when he realized there's a sharp pain on his stomach. It turned out that Xiang Shaolong has given a flying kick to his fatal point. Although his tolerance for pain is 10 times more than the average warrior, he still howled in pain as he fell backwards, never to climb up again. Naturally this kick has got nothing to do with the three killer strikes of Mohism, because for someone from the 21st century, naturally he will not stick so strictly to the rules.

The two Mohists on the other side thought that Xiang Shaolong is now on the defensive so they waved their swords to attack but did not expect that with a sudden glare of light, one of them had their right hand chopped off at the wrist while the other was struck in his thigh and as the retreated screaming, they knocked into the others advancing behind them and the situation was chaotic for a moment. Who would have expected Xiang Shaolong's swordplay to be so precise and vicious? It is total deviation from the gentle nature of the Mohist swordplay.

Wu Zhuo's performance was not any worse either as he forced his way between two enemies. His hands moved to the middle of his metal rods as he executed close bodily moves. Although his enemy managed to slash him slightly on his arm, at the same time he pierced through one of his enemy's chest while another enemy's ear was hit by the end of the metal rod.

In a short moment they have advanced a few feet. They heard a twang behind them. They hid behind a tree at the same time as an arrow shot past. Although they've killed many of their opponents, but the Mohists still continued to advance towards them from all directions in waves and the situation was not to their advantage. Xiang Shaolong saw that the situation was not right and returned Flying Rainbow to its scabbard and he reached into his robes to pull out the flying needles, shooting them continuously. This move was greatly unexpected by the others and for a moment quite a handful of people fell to the ground.

His opponents saw that wherever Xiang Shaolong waved his hand at, someone will be injured or killed, like magic and they all hurriedly hid behind trees. The two of them dared not hesitate and advanced towards the darkness and in a moment was hidden deep in the forest. The Mohists were all thrown off but they still gave chase.

Now there's another problem. With such running and in the darkness, how are they able to see the secret signals left behind by Teng and Jing? Luckily right at this time, the sound of a bird calling was heard from afar on their left, which sounded very authentic. The two of them knows it must be that mischievous and tricky Jing Jun who is making the sound so they happily made their way towards the sound.

The deeper they went into the woods the denser it became with thick snow, making it extremely difficult to walk. After butting of countless branches, there was a small light in the sky ahead, which dropped like a meteor. It turned out to be Jing Jun who jumped down effortlessly and blinked at them, saying, "This way!"

The two of them hurriedly went after him as if they've found their savior.

They walked up a slope and came to a huge rock. They could almost make out the lights coming from the Guo residence amongst the woods ahead. Teng Yi suddenly appeared on the stone, with one knee on the ground and holding a huge bow in his hand. He looked serious as he scrutinized the human sounds and torches that coming nearer. The tree of

them went behind him.

Wu Zhuo asked in puzzlement, "What are you going to do?"

Teng Yi did not reply. Wu and Xiang were perplexed. They can't see the enemy clearly in this dense forest. So what is the use of having a strong bow? Down below screams were heard. Jing Jun exclaimed happily, "They fell in!"

Both of them are excellent hunters so naturally they are expert in setting traps. 'Twang!' An arrow left Teng Yi's strong bow and shot into the dense forest. A scream was immediately heard.

Impressed, Jing Jun said, "Brother Teng's 'Arrow of the night forest' is famed throughout the Han borders, even a passing rat would not be able to avoid it."

As he spoke, Teng Yi released three arrows continuously with alarming ease and dexterity and every time a shot was launched, a scream will definitely be heard. By now Xiang and Wu realized that there's no trace of torches below at all. It turns out that Teng Yi has shot all the torch bearers and the torches fell onto the snowy ground and were extinguished. Teng Yi continued shooting his arrows, and each arrow will definitely find a target. Wu and Xiang were utterly impressed and secretly thought that luckily he is not their enemy, or else they won't even know how they have died.

Teng Yi put down his strong bow and said calmly, "No one will dare to come up now!"

Jing Jun jumped up and said, "We've tied ropes and cut up a path so we only have to follow the rope and soon we'll be at the Guo residence for the feast."

Xiang Shaolong did not expect to come out of the Zhao Mohist's encirclement so easily, and obviously saw that it's extremely important to have good strategies.

Once he thought that he can now try the prowess of the three killer strikes on Yan Ping, he was greatly energized and said quietly, "Let's go!"

The Guo family residence was built on top of the hill, following the curves of the hill. Although it's not comparable to the Wu stockade's imposing and strict aura, it boasts of the beautiful scenery that the Wu stockade lacks. In front of the residence there were two ancient trees that almost reached heaven, lanterns burned brightly at the front door with more lanterns hung on the walls on both sides, making it look as bright as day.

Xiang Shaolong informed them of his name at the door and immediately a middle-aged man who introduced himself as the housekeeper Gao Ang came and led them into the residence personally.

Walking past a stone pathway through a bamboo forest, an imposing looking building suddenly appeared in front of them. Just a look at the building they know that Guo Zhong's wealth is comparable to those of royalty. Lanterns filled the spacious garden on both sides of the road, the layout complimenting each other. Making them feel that the 20

odd feet of long stone path beneath their feet is the middle line in the residence and the opulent building before them is situated right in the middle of this garden.

There are two pavilions in the garden, built on top of a rectangular pond with magnificent looking pillars and red tiled roof and at the tip of the roof there's an magnificent looking cover made of white stone. Exquisite carvings can be seen on the beams. Regardless of the rare flowers and trees, the tiny bridges and flowing water, the quaint pathways, just these two pavilions alone is enough for one to appreciate the builder's taste and skill.

A lot of thought was put into the decoration of plants in the garden, with the main roles delegated to everlasting trees, which can withstand the cold, matched with trees that change with the season and flowers which bloom all year round, making it lush greenery. Although the garden is now filled with snow, it still makes one think of the beautiful spring/summer scenery. Once in a while they could see rare rocks brought in from other places, which increased the exquisiteness of the garden. The main residence looked even more imposing among the garden, almost comparable to the Zhao palace. It's so imposing that it's almost unbelievable.

Jing Jun who has lived almost all his life in the mountains was dumbfounded and went close to Xiang Shaolong and whispered, "Such a large house. How is one able to sleep in it?"

Xiang Shaolong saw that the housekeeper Gao Ang was way

ahead of them leading the way and can't hear their conversation so he replied with a laugh, "Hugging a beauty, do you fear not being able to sleep?"

Jing Jun immediately raised his eyebrows, obviously he's thinking of the program tonight after going back to the Wu residence.

Xiang Shaolong thought of the Zhao palace and can't help but think of the perished Zhao Ni. Remembering how he flirted with her in the royal garden. He felt a sharp pain in his heart and felt like stabbing himself to relieve that heart wrenching pain. Later he still has to put up an act with Zhao Mu, how will he be able to stand it?

Teng Yi saw him suddenly turning pale and understood his feelings. He reached out and grabbed his shoulder hard, saying, "The big picture is of most importance."

The two of them exchanged a look, and a feeling of camaraderie welled up in them.

Xiang Shaolong suppressed the pain in his heart and forced all thoughts out of his mind as he stepped up the wooden bridge, up the long flight of stairs, into the building. There were 16 tables in the building, split between the left and right side of the great hall. By the time Xiang Shaolong and his men arrived, the other guests are already there. Guo Zhong hurriedly came to welcome them and introduce him to the others.

Zhao Mu brought a group of his family warriors to show off and all of them looked fierce and strong. They obviously

skilled swordsmen. He and his men, 12 of them altogether, already took up four tables.

Yan Ping was dressed in white hemp clothing and alone, and for a change he was wearing a pair of straw shoes, an air of a proud and suave loner. If not for the barrier of Yuan Zong's revenge stuck between them, maybe Xiang Shaolong could have befriended him but now they can only solve the problem using this era's most commonly used method, which is through fights.

For the first time he met the owner of the Zhao warrior association Zhao Ba. From the name he thought he'd be a huge burly man but in face he is a lot shorter than the average person, but with big bones. Everything was expanding horizontally, wide chest and broad back with an especially thick neck and with his slightly hunched back he formed a very impressionable piece of triangular muscle, making one think that even if you try to strangle him, there's no way you can manage to cut off his air supply. His complexion was dark, his forehead protruding with a square face and huge eyes. It felt as if he has unlimited strength in his body and as he moved he gave off an imposing aura which created an impression on Xiang Shaolong as well. When he was in the special task force, fighting is as common as eating so he's good at analyzing his opponents. When he saw Zhao Ba, he immediately put him under the most difficult to handle enemy category.

Four of his disciples accompanied him to the feast and naturally they are all expert swordsmen but what caught

their attention was one of them is actually a young lady called Zhao Zhi. At first glance she did not have the beauty to captivate one's soul but her face hides an indescribable sadness, matched with her shockingly dainty phoenix eyes, slim face and sexy lips. She does exude a womanly charm with her tall figure, a head taller than Zhao Ba and only about three inches shorter than Xiang Shaolong. Such a tall lady and with a perfect body trained from constant exercising, it makes her look extremely outstanding.

Zhao Ba, Zhao Zhi and their people all behaved coolly towards Xiang Shaolong, only giving a slight nod of their heads during the introduction, not hiding their animosity at all. When Jing Jun can't help but scrutinize Zhao Zhi from head to toe, the lady looked annoyed and a murderous look flashed past her pretty eyes. Jing Jun was so shocked he dared not look at her again. The other two guests are obviously Zhao Mu's main lackeys.

The philosopher Guo Kai looked like a Taoist deity, with an extremely long beard but his eyes were darting and just like what Lady Ya said, he looks conniving but he was the warmest towards Xiang Shaolong compared to the rest. What leaves a deep impression is his feminine and shrill voice. General Yue Cheng and Guo Kai are both about 30 years old, his eyes kept opening and closing and were alternating between lively and lifeless looks. He gives one the impression that he's engrossed in wine and women, with a slim body and nimble limbs. His military outfit gave him an imposing aura. Both of them have their family servants with

them and took up four tables.

Coming up next is Guo Zhong's two sons, Guo Qiu and Guo Ting, who looks thoroughly plain. Instead what caught their attention was this intelligent looking person among their family warriors called Shang Qi. His aura and grace exudes the obvious fact that he's smart and experienced, not someone to be belittled.

After a round of introductions, Guo Zhong invited the guests to be seated. Firstly he asked Xiang Shaolong to be seated on the VIP table which is the first table on the right. Xiang Shaolong tried to reject unsuccessfully so he had no choice but to sit at this table meant for the main guest. Seated opposite him is naturally the host Guo Zhong, followed by Zhao Mu, Zhao Ba and Guo Kai.

Seated along the row on Xiang Shaolong's side is the very solemn looking Yan Ping, followed by Yue Cheng. Guo Zhong's two sons were seated right at the end. The truth is even up to now, Xiang Shaolong has no idea why Guo Zhong would organize this feast. If he was really injured earlier, it would not reflect well on Guo Zhong as well.

After a round of drinks..., Guo Zhong exclaimed happily, "My whole life was spent next to furnace making steel. Now that I'm older, all the heavy work has been passed to my sons. Now in my free time I will trek around the forests, looking at iron mines, studying the making of weapons. To me, nothing is more precious than the hand written records of the late saint Lu Gong. This time Shaolong has returned with the

treasure. Others may not know what a great contribution Shaolong has made but I am very clear about that. Come! Let us drink a toast to the comeback of great Zhao.”

Everyone lifted their cups except for Yan Ping who did not touch the excellent wine on his table at all. Xiang Shaolong secretly lamented that once Guo Zhong said this. He’s obviously implying that Zhao’s rise and fall will all depend on him. In this era where people fight over power and status, how can such words not arouse jealousy in others.

Indeed a look of unhappiness flashed past Zhao Mu and Yue Cheng’s faces while Zhao Ba looked ferocious. Only Guo Kai remained smiling while Yan Ping looked totally listless. Xiang Shaolong secretly observed the unique Zhao Zhi. Every time she lifted her cup she only took a tiny sip, unlike the others who emptied their cups.

Wu Zhuo whispered in Xiang Shaolong’s ears, “Guo Zhong is trying to cause harm to you!”

Xiang Shaolong nodded to show that he understood, and said loudly his thanks, “Mister Guo has flattered me. I am just trying my best to follow his Majesty’s and Marquis orders and they gave all instructions. I was just a little lucky and did not fail in my mission. I think this toast should be offered to Marquis instead.”

Everyone hurriedly rose their cups towards Zhao Mu.

Xiang Shaolong and his men were of course secretly cursing as they drank, scolding Zhao Mu for being a cruel, conniving thief. That beauty Zhao Zhi did not expect Xiang Shaolong to

give such a good reply and a look of surprise flashed past her eyes as she quietly sized up Xiang Shaolong. Zhao Mu's expression looked better as he chortled and happily drank up, as if all the merits should belong to him. But everyone knows that with his character, he will not be so easily taken in by Xiang Shaolong's words and this superficial happiness is just a show put up for them.

Guo Zhong signaled the housekeeper Gao Ang who was standing behind him and the latter immediately passed the orders down. More than 10 odd pretty maids wearing butterfly looking outfits came out carrying piping hot, delicious food and placed them on the tables and warmly helped the guests top up their wine cups. Xiang Shaolong kept a close eye on Yan Ping and saw that there are only vegetables and rice on his table.

Obviously Guo Zhong has made special preparations for his 'needs'. Guo Zhong chortled and said, "There have always been dance courtesans entertaining my guests during my feasts but since Juzi is willing to give me face today by attending this feast, there are slight changes in the program."

He clapped his hands hard. Suddenly 10 odd women came out from the two side doors at the back. A few of them came to the center of the hall and started performing various dangerous and exciting acrobatic stunts. Two of the women were impossibly turning somersaults on the shoulders of another two women, exchanged places before standing on the shoulders of another girl standing opposite them.

Everyone except for Yan Ping clapped and cheered.

Jing Jun boasted quietly, "They should clap only after they've seen my skills!"

Xiang Shaolong smiled. Jing Jun is after all a big kid and filled with the desire to win. After the women performed their ever changing acrobatics, they retreated out of the hall amidst the clapping of the guests.

Guo Zhong smiled, "The person whom we should really cheer is Miss Zhi. The skills of my maids here were all taught by her."

On hearing that everyone hurriedly cheered for Zhao Zhi, with Jing Jun being the loudest, making one feel at a loss whether to laugh or be angry.

Zhao Zhi stood up and quietly acknowledged them, as if she doesn't care for such admiration at all; giving one the feeling that she has a lot of self-control.

Guo Zhong suddenly coughed dryly and asked Xiang Shaolong seriously, "I heard that there is a slight misunderstanding between Shaolong and Juzi, why don't I be the mediator and solve this problem."

Xiang Shaolong secretly hated him. Guo Zhong's words all seem to be for his good, but in fact he is fanning the flames and trying to incite unhappiness. The reason is of course due to Xiang Shaolong's relationship with the Wu family. With just a few words, and it has put him in an embarrassing situation. Even if he hands them the Juzi token immediately,

he will offend Zhao Mu because he has kept the fact that he actually has the token hidden from this evil fiend. But if he does not allow Guo Zhong to become the 'mediator', Guo Zhong will have an excuse to deal with him.

Luckily Yan Ping said coldly, "Mister Guo it's too late for you to be a mediator now. Now the problem between me and Commander Xiang can only be solved according to Mohist rules."

Everyone knows without asking that a duel is the only way. How can all these powerful people in Handan not know about the Zhao Mohists trying to ambush Xiang Shaolong, and they also understood that Yan Ping has suffered a huge setback and this has planted an unsolvable enmity between them.

Zhao Mu said, "One is the most esteemed guest of his Majesty while the other is the most doted imperial guard of his Majesty, no one would want to see any side hurt. Why don't I report to his Majesty tomorrow and let him decide?"

Guo Kai and Yue Cheng were secretly chortling in their hearts. Yan Ping is well respected in Zhao and recently he made a great contribution at the city of Fuyi when the Yans invaded them and is now on a same standing as the king of Zhao. If this matter is put to him, the person who loses out will definitely be Xiang Shaolong. How can this wily old fox Guo Zhong not know what they are thinking about?

The animosity between him and the Wu family is not a recent thing and he was the one who revealed to the King of

Zhao about Wu Yingyuan and Lu Buwei's relationship. Now that the Wu family has such a formidable Young Grand-Master-in-law, he has to destroy him no matter what. At first he did not understand Zhao Mu's stand but after testing him thru their conversation, they immediately came to a quiet understanding. But now King Xiaocheng regards Xiang Shaolong very highly and he has the support of Master Wu as well so they cannot openly deal with this young swordsman who was an unknown but has now become a person of standing.

Zhao Mu first tried the plan of testing the Princess's virginity but did not expect Empress Jing to have other plans and she helped Xiang Shaolong hide the truth. Therefore he chose the highly skilled Yan Ping who has many expert fighters under him and told him that no Juzi token was found on Yuan Zong in order to cause friction between them. Then he allowed Guo Zhong to organize this feast as a cover, but in fact it's to create the perfect chance for Yan Ping to kill him.

Such ongoing vicious plans are indeed formidable. Once Zhao Mu said that, Yan Ping was the first to object, "I appreciate Marquis kind intention, but the Juzi token is our sect's ultimate treasure and it cannot be in the hands of an outsider a moment longer. This matter must be settled immediately."

Everyone was secretly happy, knowing that Yan Ping will immediately challenge Xiang Shaolong to a duel.

Zhao Ba laughed loudly and after everyone's attention was

on him, said, "The duel between Commander Xiang and Lian Jin has shocked the entire Zhao region. A pity I was at another place testing the skills of the warriors of the school and could not witness the grand event, which up to now is a regret for me. My men are hoping to witness Commander Xiang's excellent sword skill. This is purely going to be an exchange of pointers and I hope that Commander Xiang would graciously give your advice."

Wu Zhuo and the rest furrowed their brows, how can there be such an unfair situation in the world, aren't they trying to wear him down one by one? Besides, with Yan Ping testing Xiang Shaolong's skills first, it will be greatly beneficial to the later opponents.

Unexpectedly, Zhao Zhi stood up and with her sword came to Xiang Shaolong's table and said with a smile, "Would Commander please give me your pointers!"

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, what enmity does he have with her, that she'd actually challenge him? He was about to reject when Teng Yi gave Jing Jun, who was raring to duel, an eye signal.

That lad jumped up happily, his feet tapping on the table, made a somersault in the air over Zhao Zhi's head and landed behind her, saying with a grin, "If there's anything your disciple will do the work for you. The master will fight with the master; the disciple will fight with the disciple. Let me have some fun with Miss Zhi."

Xiang Shaolong and the rest saw that this lad is suddenly

now his disciple, and he is sprouting nonsensical and flirtatious words as well and they all thought it funny. The others saw that Jing Jun is as nimble as a monkey and were all secretly startled, secretly thinking that Zhao Zhi has met her match this time because Zhao Zhi is famed in Handan for her nimbleness.

Zhao Ba has always thought highly of himself and secretly thought that Xiang Shaolong is not good enough to be placed on par with him. He was quietly furious and said icily, "Xiao Zhi will exchange pointers with this little lad than!"

Zhao Zhi knows that her teacher is hinting to her not to show mercy, and also because she's always hated men who tried to flirt with her so she acknowledged the order and turned around fiercely, her long sword piercing forward as fast as lightning, aiming right at Jing Jun's heart. Her pose was exquisite yet the moves were swift and vicious, it is indeed top rated swordsmanship.

Everyone saw her sudden attack and thought that Jing Jun would certainly be caught unawares and thus unable to avoid her. Even Xiang Shaolong and Wu Zhuo's hearts almost jumped to their throats, afraid that something will happen to him. Only Teng Yi remained expressionless like Yan Ping, as if even when the sky and earth splits, there will still be no change in his expression.

CHAPTER 2
Open Animosity
[Translated by JEAN]

JING JUN did not expect his opponent to immediately strike without even a greeting. But he has lived all his life in the forests and grew up among ferocious animals so he has met even more dangerous situations than this numerous times. He chortled, made a false move as if he's going to move diagonally to the left and when the long sword is about to reach him, he moved to the right by a few millimeters and dashed to Zhao Zhi's back towards the left. His speed was even faster than a spirit.

Zhao Mu and Guo Zhong exchanged a look, and both could see the surprise in each other. With such a person helping Xiang Shaolong, it's akin to giving wings to a tiger. Therefore, that Wu Zhuo and Teng Yi must be formidable as well and they have no choice but to reevaluate Xiang Shaolong's ability.

Zhao Zhi was obviously not afraid, this sword stroke is purely to test Jing Jun's reflexes and now that she knows that her opponent is extremely nimble, she gave a soft grunt as she bent her legs and jumped up into the air, turning a huge somersault. The sharp weapon in her hand turned into a million sparks of sword aiming towards Jing Jun from the air. Zhao Ba's men immediately cheered.

Xiang Shaolong saw that Zhao Zhi's swordplay looks nice and tightly executed as well, absolutely not just showy moves and was secretly startled as he can deduce from this that Zhao Ba will definitely be extremely formidable. At the same time he remembered how Lian Jin called himself invincible in Handan; people with elevated status like Zhao Mu and Yan Ping will naturally not duel with Lian Jin. But Zhao Ba as the head of the warrior association, why did he allow Lian Jin to have his way?

He had a sudden thought, as if he could grasp the meaning of it, but can't really accurately describe what he felt. Such a weird feeling is making him feel extremely uncomfortable. The empty handed Jing Jun who was standing in the middle of the hall finally took out his weapon, a dagger secured to his waist. His hand reached into his clothes and a ball of

something blackish looking suddenly flew out from his hand. First aimed towards Zhao Zhi's right then it speeded up and turned back and hit Zhao Zhi's long sword with a 'dang'.

Zhao Zhi's sword speaks were immediately dispersed and she also dropped to the ground. That thing belonging to Jing Jun flew above his head, turning circles above following the movements of his right hand, it turned out to be a shiny, silvery crescent shaped 'Flying Knife', which is extremely sharp on both sides, especially the sharp ends that is shaped like a cow's horns, making one feel its horrible danger. It's the first time Xiang Shaolong has seen his specialized weapon and secretly thought that it will take little effort if it's used to kill beasts.

Jing Jun grinned and looked at Zhao Zhi, who seemed at a loss as to how to deal with his weapon, his eyes staring leeringly at her chest.

Zhao Ba raised his voice, "Such unorthodox weapons, how it can be even taken out in public."

A loud laugh was heard from the main door and someone commented, "Chairman Zhao's words are not quite right! In the world there are only weapons that can kill or cannot kill, there's no such thing as unorthodox."

Everyone turned around in surprise only to see the great general Li Mu step into through the door accompanied by 10 over family warriors. Gao Ang and a few Guo family guards were running after him, obviously they did not even have the chance to announce his arrival.

Xiang Shaolong took the chance to call Jing Jun back. A flash of icy murderous intent flashed past Zhao Zhi's eyes before she quietly returned to her seat.

The wily old fox Guo Zhong chuckled as he left the host table, his face full of smiles as he said, "When did general come back, or else you would certainly not be left out tonight."

Li Mu's dynamic eyes swept over all the guests who stood up to welcome him and when he saw Zhao Mu, a murderous intent flashed swiftly in his eyes before he covered it up and said with a cold smile, "I just hope that Mister Guo will not blame me for coming uninvited."

He stared at the embarrassed-looking Zhao Ba and said, "Chairman is in charge of cultivating talents for great Zhao, but please do not be such a stickler for customs. I have been fighting with barbarians for a long time and am used to seeing the countless changes on the battlefield. When two armies fight, the only goal is to win the other party, who cares what weapon is being used."

Zhao Ba was so furious his face turned dark but he was at a loss for words. Li Mu turned towards Xiang Shaolong and his tone softened as he said, "Shaolong has accomplished a great merit, I came today to offer you three toasts. Bring me wine!"

This famous Zhao general who is almost on par with Lian Po shocked the entire gathering upon his arrival and even a bully like Zhao Mu dared not speak up and risk offending this

number two person in the military. Words seem to be stuck in Le Cheng and Guo Kai's throats as they dared not reply as well. Xiang Shaolong was secretly surprised, he did not expect this person who represents the Zhao military would show his support for him publicly, and now he is no longer fighting alone.

Only Yan Ping remained seated, not showing any deference to Li Mu at all. Li Mu did not blame him at all and just drank three cups of wine with Xiang Shaolong, even seating himself down at Xiang Shaolong's table. Wu Zhuo and the rest immediately left their seats while Guo Zhong summoned his men to arrange for three extra tables behind for them and Li Mu's men.

After everyone was seated, Zhao Mu gave a dry cough and said, "Great general has just returned, I wonder how the situation at the border is?"

Li Mu replied icily, "This is the first time the Marquis of Julu has asked about the Xiong Nus but the reason I rushed back to Handan this time is because of Lady Ni's incident. After discussing with Premier Lian, we felt that there are many suspicious points regarding her suicide and decided that the military will jointly send in an official request to his Majesty to look into this matter thoroughly. Marquis is the person who dealt with this case single handedly, so you will know that my words are not baseless. I still need to seek your advice."

Xiang Shaolong was suddenly enlightened. He remembered

Zhao Qian once mentioned that Zhao Ni is the daughter-in-law of Zhao She, a famed general of Zhao who once defeated the Qin army. Because of her insistence of preserving her chastity she was well liked by the people and even has the support of the military, that's why even Zhao Mu dared not touch her. Now that Zhao Mu's lust has gotten the better of him and caused her death. There's no way the military and the other generals can maintain cordiality and now they are going to fight each other face on. That's why Li Mu is being so open about his intention to deal with Zhao Mu now.

Zhao Mu's expression changed for the worse immediately but because of Li Mu's military powers and status, he dared not throw his temper.

Guo Kai said condescendingly, "Lady Ni committed suicide because of her pining for her dead husband. This is a fact and his Majesty is most aware of this matter. General is not putting your energy at the borders, isn't all this unnecessary?"

Xiang Shaolong did not expect someone as subtle as Guo Kai would actually rebut Li Mu. Obviously the fight between the military and Zhao Mu's gang have reached a burning stage where each will not give any face to the opposite party.

Li Mu is indeed a hardened soldier. He looked heavenward and laughed loudly, "We're exactly afraid his Majesty will be tricked by unscrupulous people. That's why we have no choice but to interfere. The way to winning is first to settle

internal problems before dealing with external problems. If you say this is unnecessary, this must be a very extreme joke.”

Guo Zhong has never joined in any faction’s fight but the various groups will try to pull him towards their cause due to his influence, hence he was able to make friends with all sides. Now that he saw that the atmosphere is getting more and more fiery. He felt that things might be getting out of hand so he interrupted and tried to cool things down by saying, “We will not talk about state affairs tonight, but only talk about entertainment. I have arranged a very exciting show of beauties dancing with swords, shall we all enjoy it?”

He has not even given the signal when Yan Ping called out, “Hold it!”

Slowly standing up, he pulled out from his back the Juzi sword which is at least 1.5 times longer than the average sword and looked at Xiang Shaolong icily as he said, “Commander Xiang, tonight either you will perish or I will die. Let me see what that traitor Yuan Zong has taught you?”

Because of Yan Ping’s special status, there is no way Li Mu can find a reason to interrupt or interfere. Xiang Shaolong knows that this duel is unavoidable and thought to himself that he might as well let this duel be a form of offering for Yuan Zong. If not because that he has numbers on his side, there’s no way Yan Ping can harm even a hair on that Mohist master! He stood up loudly, his eyes icy as he stared at Yan Ping and said, “Who is the traitor? You can debate about it

when you see Mo Yi himself!”

Yan Ping snorted angrily, obviously he is feeling extremely furious as he moved to the middle of the hall and stood ready. The hall was silent; everyone knows Yan Ping's swordplay is unfathomable. Naturally some are secretly cheering while some were worried for Xiang Shaolong. Zhao Mu is secretly laughing, because if Yan Ping is killed, King Xiaocheng will still be extremely unhappy although he knows that Xiang Shaolong has no choice. If Yan Ping were to kill Xiang Shaolong and get rid of this thorn in his eye, it will be beneficial to him. So no matter what the outcome is, he has all to gain and nothing to lose.

Xiang Shaolong left his table and beyond everyone's expectations, he actually walked towards Zhao Mu's table instead, his eyes frosty as he stared at Zhao Mu unceasingly. Zhao Mu and his men were on the alert, some of them even moving their hands to their sword handles, getting ready to deal with any moves that might be harm Zhao Mu.

Xiang Shaolong came to the front of Zhao Mu's table and with a slight smile, removed the Flying Rainbow from his waist and placed it together with the scabbard on the table in front of Zhao Mu, saying calmly, “This sword will be returned to Marquis. It has once happily drunk the fresh blood of Xiao Weimou. It has not shamed the reason why Marquis generously gave it away.”

He then stared hard at this conniving thief who now has a blood feud with him before turning around and walking

towards Yan Ping who was standing in the middle of the hall.

Although Xiao Weimou died because of him, the real person who killed Xiao Weimou is Teng Yi. The reason why Xiang Shaolong said that is to deliberately antagonize Zhao Mu and at the same time let him know that he is already aware of his nefarious plan. The act of returning the sword signifies that a clear line will henceforth be drawn between them, an open rebuke. At this instant, he doesn't even care about King Xiaocheng, much less Zhao Mu. And only when he publicly shows his animosity like this can he get the full support of Lian Po, Li Mu and the military.

Indeed Zhao Mu was so furious that his face turned red and pale, looking extremely horrible. As for the rest it is the first time they found out that Xiao Weimou has been killed and were all surprised and whispered amongst themselves. An expression of shock even flashed past Li Mu and Yan Ping's faces. Xiang Shaolong felt greatly relieved that he now no longer has to put on an act with his enemy Zhao Mu. His eyes staring at Yan Ping, he reached out and drew his Mohist wooden sword as waves of murderous aura emitted from him like steam. At the same time his mind was clear, everything is inconsequential, forgetting even about Yuan Zong's revenge. Only his Mohist wooden sword and his opponent's Juzi sword is left in this world, with no place for anything else.

Although Yan Ping looks as stable as a mountain with no loopholes at all, it seems that Xiang Shaolong totally understands his enemy's movement and intent, which are

totally reflected in his calm mind. This is the method of 'keeping one's heart as clear as jade' in Mo Yi's three killer strikes, which uses an extraordinary breathing method and a resolute mind. The open animosity with Zhao Mu has also made him calmer, like a reverend who has suddenly found the way. He has now reached the epitome of the way of the sword. In other people's eyes, Xiang Shaolong seems to have suddenly changed into another person, as quiet as still water but also simmering within an explosive strength and murderous aura.

Zhao Mu and Zhao Ba revealed a look of shock at the same time. They're all expert swordsmen so they naturally know that the essence of swordplay can be most effectively executed when once reaches such a stage. Yan Ping's expression turned somber, he deeply understands Mohist swordplay's reason of emphasizing more on defense than attack so thinking that Xiang Shaolong will be young and rash, decided that he will not attack first. If not for the fact that Xiang Shaolong is revealing such a frightening aura, he will never control himself and give way like this.

Xiang Shaolong's gaze fell onto his opponent's Juzi sword. Under the firelight, it seems to radiate an indescribable shine and dust could not even settle on it. Obviously it's extremely sharp. He can't help but feel puzzled, isn't Mohist sword play's dexterity based on its cumbersome weight, but isn't this sharp and swift long sword just the opposite of the essence of Mohist swordplay? Unless Yan Ping has some other skills, or else this type of sword can never fully execute

the essence of Mohist swordplay. Once he thought of this, he has a plan in his mind and he lifted his wooden sword as he walked slowly but surely towards Yan Ping. Yan Ping's eyes were shooting daggers at him as he stared at Xiang Shaolong's shoulders.

The hall was so quiet one can hear a pin drop. Only the footsteps of Xiang Shaolong, which seems to be in total synchronization with the tempo of the universe, can be heard. Everyone suddenly has a strange feeling; as if everything is now in Xiang Shaolong's control and everything in the universe will have to bow down to him but little do they know that this is exactly the essence of the Mohist's three killer strikes.

Xiang Shaolong thought of the Zou Yan's observation tower in Daliang, remembered the beautiful scene of the sky filled with stars and an encompassing feeling of the universe flared up in him as he roared and executed the move of 'Attacking Instead Of Defending' from the three killer strikes. The Mohist sword seems to extend yet retract; suddenly it seems to be moving weirdly in a fashion that encompasses the meaning of the mystical universe straight towards Yan Ping's face. Even for a person as calm as Yan Ping, he was startled as well. He only felt his opponent's sword styles are like the Changjiang River, never ending, and if he only uses Mohist swordplay's defense style, he'll immediately be beaten. What is even more shocking is that his opponent's style seems to be made to go against the Mohist swordplay and yet they are undeniably Mohist swordplay as well. Left

with no choice, the Juzi sword morphed into icy sparks as it meets the attack with an attack.

Xiang Shaolong's intent is to force him to execute his secret skills and now that he saw his trick has worked, he suddenly retreated and executed one of the moves 'Returning Sword Stance' from 'Defending Instead of Attacking'. Yan Ping was ecstatic, thinking that his opponent's elaborate swordplay is just a farce and he returned to the old method of Mohist swordplay. He invented this swordplay of his, and named it 'Breaking Mohism', used especially to deal with his enemies within the Mohist sect. That's why he's so confident of killing Xiang Shaolong so at this point in time he won't let such a splendid opportunity pass and hurriedly moved forward to attack, totally forgetting about his initial plan to use defense as the main strategy. Xiang Shaolong's mind is as clear as water and on seeing his opponent's sword sparks grow wider, but the aim is towards his right shoulder. However, that is the loophole he deliberately showed.

Defending Instead of Attacking is the first stance of Mohist swordplay's three killer moves and it encompasses 120 moves and each move has a loophole which is in fact intricately designed traps to lure the enemy in, which is exactly the essence of using defense instead of attacks. On seeing that Yan Ping has been tricked, he laughed loudly as he moved forward like lightning and Yan Ping's sword stabbed into empty air. Xiang Shaolong turned his waist slightly and his Mohist wooden sword turned back like lightning and struck heavily but surely on his opponent's

sword.

He knows that Yan Ping's swordsmanship is excellent and extremely experienced as well, so he's definitely not worse off when compared. Even if he has the three killer strikes, he'd just learnt them after all and not totally adept at it so he is not insisting on injuring his enemy at all. However he took the opportunity and used his wooden sword which is at least three to four times heavier than his opponent's sword in addition to his extraordinary arm strength to force his opponent to use his strength. Yan Ping was immediately greatly disadvantaged as he felt his right hand go numb and his Juzi sword almost slipped from his grasp. Xiang Shaolong was secretly startled. Although Yan Ping looks as skinny as a pole on the surface, his arm strength is extraordinary and the rebounding force of the clash cause his right arm to go numb as well.

Yan Ping gave a quiet snort and moved away diagonally, executing the defense stance of Mohist swordplay, which is so tight, that even splashing water won't be able to get past him. Just as the onlookers were dumbfounded from what just happened, Xiang Shaolong moved his sword to his left hand and in a totally unexpected way, the wooden sword seemed like a swallow flying as it flew out in a curve and came back, sweeping Yan Ping's right shoulder. Yan Ping did not expect that his opponent can use the sword so well with his left hand as well and as his right hand have not recovered from the impact, he had no choice but to take another step back and face his enemy. The Juzi sword's execution was

light and nimble as it tried to counterbalance his opponent's heavy handed sweeps.

Xiang Shaolong laughed loudly, "You've been tricked!"

As his wooden sword rose to tangle with his opponent's precious sword, the two bodies joined then separated. On the surface it seems there's no injury to either of them but everyone can see that Yan Ping has been greatly disadvantaged and his face is now extremely pale. Xiang Shaolong took three steps forward towards Yan Ping. Yan Ping gritted his teeth and retreated in unison. At the same time they moved to the left in unison, as if there's an invisible thread joining the two of them together.

Yan Ping is indeed someone who has trained hard for many years and his expression quickly returned to normal, as if he is not injured at all. It turned out that earlier Xiang Shaolong had kneed Yan Ping on his lower calf and if not for the fact that his stance was steady and he immediately moved his strength down, he would have fallen to the ground. However the pain is still throbbing and he knows that he is not able to fight a long battle and he gave a low snort and the Juzi sword attacked towards his opponent, moving like a meteor.

Xiang Shaolong fighting mood is at its peak as he counted Yan Ping's breathing and steps. Before his opponent struck, he can already predict accurately if it's a real or fake move by observing the slight change in his opponent's quickened breathing and lighter footsteps. He executed the most

formidable move, 'Forgetting Feelings' from the three killer strike's 'Attacking and Defending Concurrently', throwing himself at death's door, using only the earlier advantage he gained to compete with his opponent on their innate ability and gut reactions.

There was a cry as Yan Ping's sword dropped to the ground and he hurriedly retreated, the expression on his face as pale as a dead person. His left hand clasp his right arm as fresh blood oozed from between his fingers. Although this slash did not take his life, Yan Ping will not be able to fight for the time being and it's still an unknown whether his right hand will be crippled. Immediately some people rushed out with the intention of helping to hold this proud man.

Yan Ping stood up straight and shouted at those who came forward to go away. He stared at Xiang Shaolong and asked, "Why did you hold yourself back?"

Xiang Shaolong put his sword back into the sheath on his back and said calmly, "Although Yuan Zong died because of you, but it's after all the internal fight of your Mohist sect and has nothing to do with me, so is there a need to fight to the death?"

Yan Ping asked quietly, "What swordplay were you using earlier?"

Xiang Shaolong replied calmly, "It's a swordplay I created myself, what does Juzi think of it?"

A deep hatred flashed from Yan Ping's eyes as he shouted, "Good!" and he walked towards the main door without even

turning back, not even bothering to take his sword with him.

CHAPTER 3
Mother Of Emperor Qin
[Translated by JEAN]

AFTER Yan Ping left quietly after his defeat, Xiang Shaolong took the opportunity to take his leave.

Li Mu happily gave him a lift and his men gave up three horses for Teng Yi and the rest while Xiang Shaolong was invited up the carriage with him.

The entourage rode slowly down the hill of the Guo residence.

Li Mu was silent for a moment before he bared himself, "This time we can tolerate it no longer and decided to throw

in the hatchet, using Lady Ni's incident to have a last confrontation with Zhao Mu."

He put his hand on Xiang Shaolong's shoulder and said seriously, "The Premier and I have been keeping a close watch on you. Shaolong you are our Great Zhao's a rare talent of this generation, and you're still so young."

He sighed before continuing, "If his Majesty still wants to protect Zhao Mu this time, Shaolong should leave Zhao immediately and go somewhere else to find your fame. Don't be like us and stay on blindly to protect a country with no hope."

Xiang Shaolong was surprised, "We've gotten the secret manual. Why are you still so pessimistic? I think the people of Great Zhao are slowly getting prosperous and in another few years we'll regain our lost strength!"

Li Mu interrupted him, "Shaolong you're still not very familiar with affairs of the state. Even without the battle of Changping which greatly weakened us, we still have our disadvantages. They are Xiong Nus who kept encroaching on our borders. And in order to deal with them, our resources will be depleted in the long run. That's why among the various states, only Great Zhao has the least population. Although we have many famous generals, but ever since the beginning of the empire, we can only defend our soil and does not have the ability to expand."

Xiang Shaolong sincerely felt a liking for this famous general who is on par with Lian Po and can't help but ask, "Since you

can see this point so clearly, why are you still in Zhao and not leaving?"

Li Mu looked out the window, a look of extreme sadness flashed in his eyes as he sighed quietly and said, "Man is not without feelings, unlike plants and trees. I have been defending the northern border for so long, fighting the Xiong Nus, and have established a deep relationship with those living at the borders. If I abandon them and leave, who else can stop the vicious and merciless Xiong Nus, how can I bear to let them be murdered? Hai!"

There was helplessness in his words.

Xiang Shaolong was moved and asked, "Can you delay the submission of your document to his Majesty for one to two days."

A light flashed past Li Mu's eyes as he stared at him and asked, "You seem to be confident, what ingenious move do you have?"

Xiang Shaolong respects him from the bottom of his heart so without hiding a single thing, told him about the possibility that Zhao Mu is a spy sent by the Chus to create havoc.

Li Mu grabbed his shoulders tightly, a ray of hope shot from his eyes as he said, "Shaolong you're really something. We'll use this point, which has never been thought of to deal with Zhao Mu. I'll be staying in Handan for a few days. We'll keep in close contact and coordinate the timing to submit the document."

The two of them discussed a little more and soon they arrived at the Wu family stockade. Before he left the carriage, Li Mu held him back and said, "Shaolong you're still young and full of vigor and may find it difficult to resist temptations. You may know that wine and women can harm a person, even an iron man will not be able to withstand days and nights of merry making. Shaolong you must remember that."

Xiang Shaolong knows that his flirtatious escapades, especially his affair with Lady Ya, have spread far. That's why Li Mu had such an advice for him. He blushed and lowered his head to accept the lecture.

He had just stepped into the Wu residence when the guards immediately called him and Wu Zhuo to meet with Wu Yingyuan while Teng and Jing both returned to the back courtyard to rest.

Wu Yingyuan was accompanied by Tao Fang and received them in the secret room in his inner chamber. After listening to the report on this recent trip, he praised them before saying, "Tu Xian just sent someone to contact me, saying that Lu Buwei's situation now is not too good. His enemies in the Qin court is using the reason that he's not a Qin to carry rumors to King Zhuangxiang and wants him to be excluded. King Zhuangxiang is someone who is easily swayed and he may be convinced by them. Therefore the matter of moving Ying Zheng and his mother back to Xianyang cannot be delayed further. With she and her son next to King Zhuangxiang, Lu Buwei's status will be as stable as a

mountain and he may even become the premier. Otherwise even our hopes will be dashed.”

Xiang Shaolong was still moved by what Li Mu had said so he furrowed his brows, “Can we delay it for a few days, and see if there’s hope to topple Zhao Mu first?”

Wu Yingyuan looked at him with concentration, “I know you can’t wait to tear Zhao Mu to pieces, but this is after all a personal feud. You should take into account the bigger picture. Now the fate of the Wu family is on your shoulders, one mistake and everyone will perish.”

Xiang Shaolong sighed quietly, “If Zhao Mu is toppled, is there still hope for Great Zhao?”

Wu Yingyuan was irritated and interrupted him, “That’s just wishful thinking. Even if Zhao Mu is killed, with such a muddleheaded ruler like King Xiaocheng, the Zhao family will still be destined to die. The Crown Prince is nothing good as well. The only way out for the Wu family is to rely on Qin. That is the only hope.”

Xiang Shaolong lowered his head speechlessly, and knows that after his conversation with Li Mu, he has been greatly moved by his great sacrifice.

Only Wu Yingyuan, this 100% businessman is more formidable. He doesn’t talk about feelings, only about actual benefits, because history has long proven that what he said is indeed correct.

Wu Yingyuan dotes greatly on this son-in-law in his heart

and knows that his words have been a little too stern, so his voice turned more gentle as he said, "I know that Shaolong is smarter than others. I wonder if you have any headway regarding the matter of sending Ying Zheng and his mother back."

Xiang Shaolong braced himself up and said, "It's still too early now. After I rest for a while, I will look for Zhu Ji. Only if she can be convinced will the matter be able to succeed."

Wu Yingyuan and the rest were stunned.

It's already the Mou⁷ hour and he still said it's too early?

Does he want to wait until the middle of the night to sneak into Zhu Ji's bedchamber?

Xiang Shaolong soaked himself in the pool, his mind in a dilemma.

He is someone who places great emphasis on relationships. The first place he came to after traveling in the time machine is the state of Zhao and after spending this time with the Zhaos, and after how he and the Zhao army relied on each other when they went to Wei; he's already established close relations with them. Subconsciously he has regarded Zhao as his own country and hope to do something for her.

But he knows that even if he gets rid of Zhao Mu, the state of Zhao won't be any better. Such a torn feeling made him even more dejected.

⁷ Mou = Time between 7pm to 9pm

Ting Fangshi who is next to him asked gently, "What is Shaolong thinking about?"

Wu Tingfang who is on the other side said with a little jealousy, "Of course he's thinking of Sister Ya and Princess Qian!"

Xiang Shaolong hugged the two naked beauties and remembered Li Mu's warning about not indulging in wine and women so he said with a bitter smile, "With you two beauties next to me, how can I think of other women. It's because I have a matter to attend to tonight and cannot accompany you, that's why I was feeling troubled."

Wu Tingfang said understandingly, "Master Tao has informed us. Xiang Lang just put your mind at ease and go. We will wait for your return obediently. Ai! I forgot to tell you, ever since you went to Daliang, Sister Ting has been sleeping with me every night, talking about our secrets. Tonight us sisters will wait for you on the bed."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought, "Oh heavens!" If they want intimacy everytime, it'll be very difficult even if he wants to avoid wine and women.

Wu Tingfang continued excitedly, "I did not expect even Yan Ping is not your match and I really hope you can put that Zhao Ba down a peg or two as well."

Xiang Shaolong thought of Zhao Zhi and can't help but ask about her.

Wu Tingfang lowered her head with embarrassment as she

replied, "I heard she's one of the lovers of that baddie Lian Jin. You killed Lian Jin so naturally she'll hate you to the core."

Xiang Shaolong was suddenly enlightened.

The reason why Zhao Ba is so full of hatred for him, may be related to this, and not because he is in cahoots with Zhao Mu. But of course there may be other reasons as well.

Whether in this era or the 21st century, whoever has power will certainly have other people who will side him. This is a fact that will never change with time.

Xiang Shaolong saw that time is almost up and told Chunying who was adding hot water into the pool, "Help me get Masters Teng Yi and Jing Jun here."

The snow fell relentlessly on the ancient city of Handan.

Xiang Shaolong and Teng Yi hid themselves in a dark corner, looking at the huge house with lanterns still lighted in it.

Xiang Shaolong whispered in Teng Yi's ears with a smile, "That rascal Jing Jun must be secretly cursing now because I dragged him out from a warm bed with a woman in it."

Teng Yi gave a cold snort, "Dare he? I've warned him, if he starts going overboard, I'll send him packing back home."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that with Teng Yi controlling Jing Jun, it'll not be easy for this lad to go overboard.

The wind howled and Jing Jun who is 10 times more nimble than the average person jumped down from the wall and

came quickly to where they were hiding. He said quietly, "I didn't expect the inside to be so huge! I've found out where Zhu Ji lives."

Xiang Shaolong nodded his head, "Let us go then!"

The three of them dashed out from the dark place and came to the bottom of the high wall.

Xiang Shaolong looked at the snowing sky and thought that a dark and windy night like this is perfect for espionage. Everyone would be snuggling in their blankets in such cold weather and even the guards will be hiding in the rooms lighted with stoves.

In this quiet and lonely night, they seem to be in another unique world. Especially when Xiang Shaolong is thinking that he can see the beauty who gave birth to the first Emperor of China. He felt both excited and exhilarating.

Xiang Shaolong savored this strange feeling carefully as he followed Jing Jun and climbed over the wall swiftly, landing within the courtyard.

Inside the houses all joined one another, making it difficult for one to see everything at once. What is unexpected is that with Ying Zheng's status as a hostage, why is he able to use such a big place.

They landed in a rectangular opened air courtyard and facing the high wall is a row of houses, which looks like the residences of servants.

Jing Jun executed his skills and led the way in front with

familiarity. They passed by numerous houses, came to a garden forest with a pond, a fake hill and pavilion.

Jing Jun pointed at a two storey building on the other side of the garden forest, which still has lamps burning in it and said, "I overheard the maids talking earlier, Zhu Ji should be staying there but I don't know which room?"

Teng Yi scrutinized the surroundings and said, "We'll keep a look out here for you, if the situation is not right, Jing Jun will give out a bird call to inform you."

Xiang Shaolong nodded his head in agreement and snuck towards the building. He chose a window with no lights and after checking that nothing is amiss, dashed inside.

This place looks like a small hall.

He quickly walked to the wooden door leading out and plastered his ear on it. On hearing that there's no one outside, he pushed the door open and went out.

Outside is a corridor with one end leading to the outer hall and the other end to a flight of stairs leading upstairs.

The house was quiet; it seems that the maids are already in dreamland.

He had not finished this thought when he heard footsteps from the top of the stairs.

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly hid back into the room and wondered why someone is still awake at a time like this.

The footsteps stopped in front of the door.

Xiang Shaolong was astounded, there's not enough time for him to leave by the window and he hurriedly went to a corner and squat down behind a small cabinet. Although it's not a good place to hide, it's better to come face to face with the person coming in.

Indeed someone pushed the door and entered, followed by the sounds of cups and plates knocking on one another.

Xiang Shaolong knows that the other party has no idea that someone is hiding in a corner so he boldly extended his head out for a look. It turned out to be two pretty maids.

One of the maids yawned and said, "He's the worst, every time he comes Madam would not be able to sleep, and we'll have to serve them at the side."

The other maid said, "Madam is usually a person of few words but when she sees him she seems to have endless things to say."

The maid who spoke first laughed, "It's better than serving that lecher. His body can't make it yet he wants to rely on hateful toys. Sister Xiang has only half a life left after being toyed with him for three nights in a row. Hai!"

Xiang Shaolong's heart dropped; needless to say this lecher must be Ying Zheng. Now that the maids are talking about it, it seems that Lady Ya's words are not wrong at all.

What is this all about? How can the heroic and smart Emperor Qin is someone like that, how is he going to exterminate Lu Buwei in future and consolidate the six

states, building the largest foundation for China.

Amongst the chatter, the two maids prepared the tea and left.

Now that he knows that someone is still awake, Xiang Shaolong dare not go upstairs via the stairs so he left by the window and saw that there is a darkened window on the second floor. He was climbing halfway up when a group of patrol came with lanterns from the small path in the garden. Xiang Shaolong was startled, because if this is where Zhu Ji stays, the guards will certainly be extra alert and will not miss this person hanging in midair.

He gritted his teeth and increased his speed, in a moment he went through the window into the room.

It's a large bedroom for a lady. The floor was piled with thick and soft rugs while the bed is empty. Besides a few tables and mirrors, on the walls pretty paintings were hung. Xiang Shaolong was suspecting if this is Zhu Ji's bedroom when the familiar footsteps of the two maids sounded outside the door again.

Xiang Shaolong secretly lamented.

This is what they say, 'a wolf in front and a tiger below'. Luckily there is a large wardrobe at the corner of the room and left with no choice, he ran over and opened it for a look. There are two compartments inside, although there are clothes piled on the lowest compartment, but he can still squeeze in, if barely. He dare not hesitate any longer and immediately squeezed in and just as he closed the wardrobe

door, the two maids pushed open then door and came in.

Followed by sounds of them arranging the blankets.

After a moment the two maids walked out but they did not close the door.

Xiang Shaolong was secretly lamenting, it seems that Zhu Ji and her lover will come in anytime, then won't he have to suffer in here and listen to Zhu Ji's moans.

Tonight seems to be a difficult time to get in touch with Zhu Ji. Spending the night under the blankets with Wu Tingfang and Ting Fangshi is naturally a hundred times better than being curled up in here.

Besides if Teng and Jing see that he has not come out after so long, something may happen.

Just as he was feeling troubled, footsteps, one heavy and one light, could be heard coming closer, followed by the sound of the door closing.

Xiang Shaolong secretly cried out, 'Heavens!' and he closed his eyes and left everything to fate.

Outside he could hear the friction of the clothes moving, and the moaning made by a man and woman.

Since Xiang Shaolong was feeling bored, he started guessing who Zhu Ji's lover might be.

Reasonably it definitely cannot be Zhao Mu, since he knows that the military will soon be going to King Xiaocheng tomorrow to settle scores with him, so now he should be

going to the King of Zhao and trying to poison his mind. Because after all, the King of Zhao does have some feelings for Zhao Ni and if he really finds out that the person who caused her demise is Zhao Mu, he may ignore all 'marital' feelings and order Zhao Mu's death. So there's no way Zhao Mu will take this flippantly.

But Zhu Ji and her son have always been under Zhao Mu's supervision, and anyone else who wants to go near will need his permission.

Who can this person be then?

An extremely gentle voice can be heard from outside the wardrobe, "The thing that I asked you how is it now?"

Xiang Shaolong was secretly complimenting her. Just by listening to her voice, he knows that this woman is very well versed in using her gift of beauty to ensnarl men. No wonder, the newly crowned King Zhuangxiang could not forget about her.

Since Lu Buwei chose her to captivate King Zhuangxiang, naturally she is someone extraordinary.

That lover replied, "Now the situation is uncertain, it's still not the time to return to Qin."

Xiang Shaolong was shocked and he immediately recognized him as the effeminate philosopher Guo Kai.

He did not expect it to be him. No wonder he linked up with Zhu Ji, just that he wonders if Zhao Mu is aware of this matter.

Zhu Ji pouted, "What's so uncertain. Now that my husband has ascended the throne, as long as my son and I can return to Xianyang, Zheng'er will be the crown prince to ascend the throne. What's there to worry about?"

Sounds of kissing were heard again and Zhu Ji's moans became more intense. Obviously Guo Kai is trying all his means to pacify Zhu Ji.

Zhu Ji exclaimed breathlessly, "Don't!"

Guo Kai replied, "Every second of the night is worth a thousand gold, it's rare for us to have this chance. Come! Let's talk further within the bed!"

Zhu Ji replied a little angrily, "You're only interested in my body but not at all concerned about my troubles. Tell me! Why didn't you do what you promised me?"

Guo Kai replied anxiously, "Don't you know that I've put a lot of work into it? It's just that King Zhuangxiang has just ascended the throne and all parties are now keeping a close eye on both of you. Besides, Lu Buwei's status is not that stable now as well and he's in danger of being overthrown at any moment. No matter how we see it, you should not be sneaking back into Xianyang at this moment."

Xiang Shaolong gradually understood, the reason Zhu Ji ensnarled this important person in Zhao Mu's gang is because she wants to make use of his power to escape Handan.

It's just that one wonders if Guo Kai is really planning to

betray Zhao Mu or he just wants to cheat her of her body, and it seems more likely that it's the latter. One just have to think that Guo Kai now has power in his hands and he has a large extended family in Zhao, so no matter how selfish he is, once he is faced with a life and death decision, he'll certainly think of his own parents, brothers, wife and children first.

The most embarrassing thing is if Guo Kai were to go to Qin, he will certainly lose his life and Zhu Ji. Because Zhu Ji's two other men, regardless of whether it's Lu Buwei or King Zhangxiang, will certainly kill him because of jealousy.

For someone as smart as Guo Kai, how can he not consider about something so important?

Of course Zhu Ji understands this reasoning as well, but she's just too anxious to return to Qin and become the Empress so she couldn't care about anything else.

Indeed Zhu Ji remained silent.

Guo Kai said gently, "Come! The weather is so cold! What can be a more comfortable place than beneath a blanket?"

Sounds of clothes being removed followed.

Zhu Ji's voice said, "You get onto the bed first, I'll join you shortly after undressing."

Guo Kai is obviously very tired and he yawned and went up the bed.

Outside sounds of Zhu Ji removing her robes and accessories

were heard.

A strange noise was heard. It turned out to be Guo Kai snoring.

Xiang Shaolong was affected as well and felt his eyelids getting heavy. Just as he was falling asleep. Footsteps came nearer.

Any drowsiness was immediately dissipated, and he secretly thought that it can't be that much of a coincidence that Zhu Ji is actually coming to the wardrobe to take her sexy lingerie.

He has not finished his thought when the wardrobe door was pulled open.

Xiang Shaolong had an idea out of impulse and jumped up, hugging her and throwing her down to the ground with one hand covering her tiny mouth, pressing her voluptuous and scantily clad alluring body beneath his. At the same time, he whispered close to her ear, "I am Xiang Shaolong, here to look for you on Lu Buwei's orders!"

He repeated it three times before Zhu Ji stopped her struggle and her delicate body softened.

On the bed, the rhythmic snoring of Guo Kai was heard.

Xiang Shaolong thanked heavens and raised himself up a little, and came face to face with Zhu Ji.

He can't help but feel his heart beat faster.

He saw the lady under him was extremely enticing, filled

with the allure of a mature woman with eyes that could speak volumes, which are now sizing Xiang Shaolong up.

Suddenly Xiang Shaolong could feel her whole alluring body and a wave of lust coursed through him. He was so startled he hurriedly suppressed his lust in case she feels it.

He slowly removed his large hand that was covering her mouth and immediately saw Zhu Ji's pretty face.

She's certainly not a perfect and delicate beauty like Wu Tingfang, Lady Ya or Ji Yanran. Her face is a little too long. The bridge of her nose a little crooked and her lips a little too thick, but when matched with her pretty eyes, it formed a wild beauty and allure that can take one's soul away. Especially her lip which seems to be full of character, the corner lightly curved up, making men think that it's not an easy task to subdue her.

Heavens! This is Emperor Qin's birth mother!

He has been looking for Emperor Qin all this time but never in his dreams did he think that he could take advantage of his mother like this.

Her body fragrance drifted into his nose.

Zhu Ji looked at him unblinkingly and said quietly, "I know who you are, because the person Zhao Mu most wants to get rid of now is you."

Xiang Shaolong recollected his wandering thoughts and went close to her ear and said, "I hope you also know the relationship between the Wu family and Mister Lu. He sent

Tu Xian to make contact with us to get you and your son back to Xianyang as soon as possible.”

Xiang Shaolong tried to bear with the itch he felt in his ear and suppressed the urge to take advantage of her, but he can't help but lightly bit on her rounded earlobe and said, “Firstly I have to make contact with you to understand the situation before we can settle the details of escape. I...”

The sound of someone turning was heard on the bed.

The both of them were startled.

Zhu Ji said hurriedly, “Come again tomorrow night! I'll wait for you.”

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly rolled aside.

Zhu Ji stood up nimbly and at this time Guo Kai called for her from the bed.

Zhu Ji blushed slightly as she lowered her head and stared at Xiang Shaolong for a moment.

Xiang Shaolong can't help but feel lust welling up as he reached out and grabbed her calf, pinched it before letting go.

That captivating feeling is even more touching than the actual act of copulation.

Zhu Ji rolled her eyes at him before walking towards the bed.

Only after she extinguished the lamp and went into the bed curtains did Xiang Shaolong regain his thoughts.

He secretly thought that this woman is indeed formidable before leaving hurriedly.

By this time even if he made any noise, Guo Kai would not find out.

CHAPTER 4
No Route For Advance Or Retreat
[Translated by JEAN]

AFTER breakfast, Xiang Shaolong went to see Master Wu and his son but he did not see Wu Zhuo and Tao Fang.

He remembered the suspicious Chu who was in contact with Zhao Mu and knows that those two must be away because of this matter.

When he reported the situation last night when he saw Zhu Ji, Master Wu and his son turned somber.

Wu Yingyuan furrowed his brows and said, "This woman is extremely formidable, no man can escape her allure. But

why is Guo Kai so bold, the servants there should all belong to Zhao Mu, so how can he hide his visits from Zhao Mu?"

Master Wu replied, "Zhao Mu allowd Guo Kai to handle a lot of matters for him, for all you know those people there are all placed by Guo Kai. That's why he can steal what he's supposed to protect without any fear at all."

He turned towards Xiang Shaolong and said, "The two new family warriors you recruited are rare talents. Treat them well, wealth and women, just give it to them."

Xiang Shaolong replied, "I understand!" but he secretly thought to himself that a relationship based on such material goods, how can it sustain?

Wu Yingyuan replied, "It seems that Shaolong can easily smuggle them out now, the question is how to leave Handan and avoid the pursuing soldiers along the way?"

He paused and asked suspiciously, "Isn't this a little too easy!"

Xiang Shaolong was only worried about the other aspect, "Our Wu family has such an extended family, easily more than a thousand, how can we escape out of Zhao?"

Wu Yingyuan smiled, "I've arranged for this since two years ago. The Wu family has business all over the world, so all along there's always been people who were sent to other areas to take care of business and the farms. Recently, with the excuse of setting up a new farm, even Tingwei has been sent out, in case he lets slip of our plans when he's out

merrymaking.

Xiang Shaolong was suddenly enlightened, no wonder he have not seen Wu Tingwei. He asked, "Since the King of Zhao is aware of father-in-law and Lu Buwei's being in correspondence, and now that we keep sending our family people out of Handan, how can he not be suspicious?"

Wu Yingyuan replied, "They can only suspect! They have never gathered any concrete proof. Besides, both the Guo family and us have connections with the various powerful people in other states and sometimes we even helped the King of Zhao in overseas secret missions. If not for Zhao Mu fanning the flames at the side, what's the big deal about having relations with Lu Buwei?"

Xiang Shaolong is even more perplexed, "Why is Zhao Mu so intent on getting rid of the Wu family?"

Master Wu slapped on the table and exclaimed angrily, "It's all because of that fellow Guo Zhong who caused all these. I don't know how he managed to find out that one of our family ancestors is a Qin, and investigated that the family name Wu is a major family name over at the Qin side. That's why the King of Zhao's suspicions of us grew day by day. Zhao Mu is just following the King of Zhao's wishes and taking the opportunity to trample us!"

Only now did Xiang Shaolong manage to find out what happened.

Wu Yingyuan returned to the earlier topic, "Since Guo Kai has secretly entangled himself with Zhu Ji; we have to think

of a way to make use of this matter to affect the relationship between Guo Kai and Zhao Mu. Without Guo Kai around to give nasty ideas to Zhao Mu, it'll be easier to handle Zhao Mu."

The corners of Master Wu's lips revealed a slight mysterious smile as he said, "We'll talk about this later."

He turned towards Xiang Shaolong and said, "You better think of a more concrete plan so that you can strengthen Zhu Ji's confidence when you see her tonight, then it'll be easier to cooperate in future."

At this time a servant came to report that there's a guest looking for Xiang Shaolong.

Xiang Shaolong was feeling perplexed, who could be looking for him?

By now Xiang Shaolong's status in the Wu family is even greater than before, and is obviously the most important person after Master Wu and Wu Yingyuan, so he received the guest in the main hall of the main mansion.

He went to the hall, and his visitors turned out to be the old family warriors of Prince Shaoyuan, Liu Cao and Pu Bu.

Xiang Shaolong came forward joyfully and helped the two of them up, asking with a mixture of surprise and joy, "I've been waiting for you arrive everyday, and finally my wait is over."

The two of them saw how Xiang Shaolong holds them in such high regard and were so grateful that hot tears welled

in their eyes.

Xiang Shaolong asked about the situation in Daliang.

It turns out that ever since Xiang Shaolong escaped out of Prince Xinling's residence, Prince Xinling has been livid. After he found out that besides the front section of the 'Lu Gong's Secret Manual', the rest has been swapped and stolen, he was so upset he almost committed suicide. He even suspected his sister Lady Pingyuan had leaked the news to Xiang Shaolong and started behaving coldly towards her and her son.

Because of this Prince Shaoyuan became very bad tempered and kept on scolding and beating his family warriors. Pu Bu and the rest took the opportunity to resign.

Without the support of Prince Xinling, Prince Shaoyuan faces the difficulty of supporting 200 odd family warriors so he might as well dismiss them. Therefore Pu Bu and 40 odd other men returned to Handan.

They are familiar with the surroundings here, and after finding out that Xiang Shaolong is safe, came to find him immediately.

Xiang Shaolong suddenly has an idea and after summoning someone to borrow from Wu Yingyuan a large sum of money, he stuffed the money to the two of them and said, "Find a place to settle down but you must remember not to reveal your relations with me. Have fun and make merry all you can, when I need your help, I will look for you."

The two of them knew that he is now in a life and death fight with Zhao Mu and on hearing what he said, understood his meaning. They also saw that he is 10 times more generous than Prince Shaoyuan but his character is a 100 times better, so obviously they will want to follow him loyally.

Liu Cao said, "We're very popular in Handan, and now that we've officially left the Pingyuan Residence, why don't we pretend to throw in our lots with Zhao Mu's devious faction so we can become your eyes and ears."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that this is indeed a good idea, who would have thought that the family warriors of Pingyuan Residence who used to be his enemies would now belong to him. They discussed who they should align themselves with and decided on how to make contact before the two of them left happily.

Xiang Shaolong felt more relieved and went to look for Teng Yi. Seeing that he was training the warriors of the Wu family, he thought of the idea of the special task force and told him, "See if my suggestion is doable, among these 2000 warriors, choose about 100 of the best and name them 'Superior Troops'. Bring them to the farm and train them separately, let them learn the various different skills. If every one of them has half the skills of you and Jing Jun, it won't be an impossible task when the time comes to force our way into the hostage residence to save people."

At first Teng Yi furrowed his brows deeply when he heard that, secretly thinking how a hundred people can accomplish

anything great. Until Xiang Shaolong explained the method of keeping the strong and eliminating the weak as well as the strict training he underwent while in the special task force. This extremely experienced and ferocious warrior had to admit defeat and say, "This is the first time I've heard of such training methods. Shaolong you're absolutely an incomparable military genius. War in your hands has become a form of art."

Xiang Shaolong secretly laughed, if he can change the sabers, swords and arrows into guns and cannons, just this ancient special task force will be able to conquer the six states and unify the world. By then he would need to fear a mere Zhao Mu.

The two of them discussed in detail the methods of training and equipment needed before Xiang Shaolong led Jing Jun and those 10 personal bodyguards towards Lady Ya's residence.

While riding on the road, Xiang Shaolong thought of the missing Mei Canniang and had the urge to immediately turn his horse around and go to Mulberry Village to take a look for himself.

He then remembered Ji Yanran at faraway Daliang and for a moment was helplessly filled with sadness.

Jing Jun who was riding alongside him was looking at his surroundings and looking at the pedestrians on the streets, he suddenly said earnestly, "Xiao Jun is very grateful towards Brother Xiang and Brother Teng. Without both of you who

brought me to such an exciting and fun place, I don't know how I am going to spend my life?"

Xiang Shaolong cast aside his troubles and said with a laugh, "But it may also cause you to lose your life!"

Jing Jun grinned and said suavely, "Then I can only accept my fate! Precisely because of this danger that I may lose my life anytime, it makes fun time with beauties all the more interesting. That feeling is just like when I was five years old and the first time I helped my father hunt tigers."

Xiang Shaolong asked hoarsely, "A five-year old kid can't even walk steadily, what help can you render?"

Jing Jun laughed as well, "That I forgot, I only remember when the ferocious tiger fell into the trap, the horrible roars were so frightening that I peed in my pants."

Xiang Shaolong can't help but chortle loudly, his sadness momentarily forgotten.

Behind them hoof beats were heard.

Everyone turned their heads back in unison on hearing it.

A horse came nearer, the rider's cloak covering the whole head and for a moment they can't see the face clearly. Only when it got near did they recognize the person.

Jing Jun's eyes brightened immediately.

Xiang Shaolong was slightly surprised as he called out, "Where is Miss Zhi going?"

Zhao Zhi slowed her horse down and went to Xiang

Shaolong's other side, turned her face towards him and looked at him frostily, "Where is Commander going then?"

Jing Jun who was on the other side blinked at her and said, "Miss Zhi have yet to reply Brother Xiang's question?"

Zhao Zhi felt angry upon seeing Jing Jun, feeling that he's more irritating than anyone else and retorted with fury, "When adults are talking, it's not your place to interrupt!"

Xiang Shaolong laughed, "Miss is wrong, Xiao Jun is my good brother, his words are my words."

Jing Jun did not expect Xiang Shaolong to think so highly of him and he immediately became proud, puffing up his chest and deliberately heaved a sigh of pity as he said, "And I thought Miss Zhi is here to look for me!"

Zhao Zhi was so furious that her pretty face turned pale, "Who wants to look for you?"

Without knowing why, Jing Jun's words and actions always irritated and anger her.

Jing Jun chuckled, "Who are you looking for then!"

Xiang Shaolong can't help but feel that this lad is indeed quite good at making fun and flirting with women.

Zhao Zhi knows that she has fallen into Jing Jun's questioning trap. If she answers that she's here to look for Xiang Shaolong, it will mean that Jing Jun's earlier insinuation that she has taken a liking for Xiang Shaolong and is therefore here to look for him. But if her answer is no, naturally she's

here to look for Jing Jun.

But the truth is Zhao Zhi doesn't even know herself why she is here to look for Xiang Shaolong.

Last night Xiang Shaolong had an outstanding victory over Yan Ping, who is a highly respected martial arts master in Handan, shocking everyone present.

Zhao Ba who has always thought highly of himself is now feeling afraid, especially since the military is now backing Xiang Shaolong up. Zhao Ba will not dare to embroil himself in the fight between the two big political and military powers. After the feast he immediately warned all his disciples, especially Zhao Zhi, not to antagonize Xiang Shaolong.

But Zhao Zhi is a proud person and after she went home, the more she thought about it, the more upset she became. After she woke up, she unconsciously went up her horse and came riding to the Wu residence and on the way there actually bumped into Xiang Shaolong, that's why she caught up with them.

Right now she is dumbfounded and her pretty face blushed.

Xiang Shaolong does not know the degree of closeness she has with Lian Jin, so he said with a quiet sigh, "At that time, being in a situation that one is forced to determine life and death in a duel. It's either Lian Jin will perish or I will die. Besides Lian Jin and Zhao Mu used underhanded tricks first while my fight with him was aboveboard, so who can blame me?"

Zhao Zhi was stunned, and lowered her pretty face.

The matter regarding Lian Jin and Zhao Mu using aphrodisiac to weaken Xiang Shaolong's energy has spread through the powerful in the imperial court long ago. Although Zhao Zhi has heard something about this, she forced herself to ignore it. But without knowing why, the way that Xiang Shaolong just talked about it like a passing matter, made her truly believe what has happened. Or maybe it's because last night Xiang Shaolong's conduct has shown that he is not one who is afraid of the powerful and that he is aboveboard in his attitude!

Her love for Lian Jin may be strong, but it's all superficial attraction to the opposite sex. Lian Jin had made use of her young blossoming heart and took the opportunity to steal her heart.

Such first love may be unforgettable for her, but it has not reached the stage where it has eaten into her soul. When Lian Jin's perfect image was destroyed, this love dissipated with the wind as well and for a moment her mind was in a blank, and she did not know what to do.

Xiang Shaolong seems to understand the change in her perfectly and asked with a smile, "Miss Zhi, will you let Jing Jun send you home?"

Zhao Zhi was startled, "I don't need anyone's escort!"

She slapped her horse and went galloping into the side street on the left.

Xiang Shaolong gave Jing Jun an eye signal and Jing Jun was overjoyed as he slapped his own horse and went after her, ignoring the looks of others as he shouted, "Miss Zhi, wait for me!"

Xiang Shaolong was delighted.

That Zhao Zhi is really not too bad, and extremely compatible with Jing Jun both in terms of age and appearance. Most importantly he could tell that Jing Jun has fallen for her at first sight. But it seems that if he wants to woo her successfully, he'll have to put in a lot of effort.

Suddenly Xiang Shaolong realized that he has changed a lot.

If it was in the past, women to him are the more the merrier and he will never reject any who approaches him. Maybe now he has too many beauties, or maybe the pain of having the women he love die horribly one after another has made his attitude towards women a lot more cooler and he doesn't really feel like stepping into the love arena now.

Everyone who is born will have to face the deaths of people around him, and the end will come with his own death.

For the past year, he has experienced the heart wrenching pain of such deaths.

He thought of what happened with Zhu Ji last night. At that time although he felt great lust, it has nothing to do with love or feelings at all, just the rash desire of pure basic attraction to the opposite sex.

But it's so difficult to control.

He'll have to be careful when he sees her tonight, or else if he were to have a physical relationship with her, things will become even more complicated.

He only hopes that she will not flirt with him, this woman truly understand how to lure men.

Lady Ya's residence came into view and Xiang Shaolong sighed before riding in.

The guards hastened their horses to follow him closely and 11 steeds swept into Lady Ya's residence like the wind.

Lady Ya has gone to the Palace and only Zhao Qian and Master Pan is in the residence.

Zhao Pan has matured in a short time, unlike in the past where he will slip out and have fun the whole day or make fun of the maids or forming up gangs to create trouble.

Zhao Qian pitied him because of the horrific experience he went through and accompanied him in his studies. As for Zhao Pan, in front of his beautiful cousin, changed his character and studied hard as well.

Xiang Shaolong's heart ached on seeing this and he took Zhao Pan to the garden where he conscientiously taught him the Mohist swordplay and ordered his men to spar with him.

While Zhao Pan was forgetting himself in his sword practice, Xiang Shaolong started chatting with Zhao Qian who was looking from the side, "I didn't expect this child to become so understanding."

Zhao Qian's eyes reddened as she replied, "The person he loves most is Aunt Ni. Now his heart is filled with hatred, not only does he hate Zhao Mu, he also hates Imperial Father. That's why he sees you as a role model and wants to become as smart and brave so that he can avenge Aunt Ni."

Xiang Shaolong looked at Zhao Pan, who has a face of darkened concentration and determination, which is clearly a mismatched expression for a person of his age at all and he felt iciness in his heart.

His intuition tells him that Zhao Pan will definitely not be an ordinary person in future but for now he cannot guess what great things he will accomplish.

Zhao Qian said quietly, "He accepted me partly because I belong to you, and also because like him, I hate Imperial Father and Zhao Mu greatly as well."

Xiang Shaolong suddenly felt terrible and he asked, "Doesn't your Imperial Father respect Lady Ni the most? Why would he just sit there and look at Zhao Mu commit murder? At least he should look into this matter thoroughly. Besides this matter has caused the military much unhappiness and this can become the greatest danger for Zhao since the battle of Changping."

Zhao Qian sighed sadly, "No one can understand Imperial Father. He wasn't like that in the past. But after the battle of Changping, he changed totally, becoming indecisive and kept on changing his mind about matters, to the extent that he's even a little afraid of facing his officials, especially the

generals from the military. He allowed Zhao Mu to exercise sole power and cover everything up. Like this matter regarding Lady Ni, he should have given strict orders for a thorough investigation but after Zhao Mu's interference. He made this into a small matter very easily and thus settled it, making all in the palace disheartened with him."

From Zhao Qian's words, Xiang Shaolong saw the other effect the battle of Changping has done to the state of Zhao.

The defeat of that battle is mainly because King Xiaocheng fell for the Qin's extremely juvenile trick of sowing discord and allowed Zhao Kuo to replace Lian Po. It can also be considered a clash of power between a newly crowned leader and a powerful old general.

After this greatest defeat in the history of Zhao which totally weakened them, King Xiaocheng lost his confidence and became someone who runs away from reality, to the extent that he's even afraid of seeing the silent reproach in his ministers' eyes.

Therefore Zhao Mu took the opportunity to come in and fulfilled his mental and physical needs.

Maybe the King of Zhao became a homosexual because he has given up on himself, and was embarking on destroying himself out of guilt. Of course it is also possible that he is born like that but what is the true reason, maybe even King Xiaocheng does not know himself.

Zhao Qian said sadly, "I still miss the time when we were escaping from Daliang, hoping to have you hugging and

loving me every night. Shaolong! When will we leave this hideous place, find a deserted place and let Qian'er cook for you while you hunt for our livelihood?"

Xiang Shaolong was laughing bitterly to himself, if he had stayed on at Mei Canniang's valley, maybe he would be able to spend the rest of his life like that. But now it's as if he is already riding on the tiger and finds it difficult to dismount, and he can't do it even if he wants to.

Even if he goes to Qin, what he will meet may be even more complicated fights for power. In this ancient warring states period, it seems that there is no paradise to live in. Or else Mei Canniang would not have been almost raped by bandits and Teng Yi's wife and children would not have been killed.

He sighed and told the story about paradise to Zhao Qian. When this pretty princess is totally engrossed in the story, as if her soul has flown to that human utopia, Zhao Ya came back with a somber expression.

Xiang Shaolong and her went into a quiet room for discussion.

Zhao Ya sighed, "On the battlefield Li Mu is an unmatched and fierce warrior, but when it comes to political intrigue he is really too impetuous and also underestimated Zhao Mu's influence over Imperial brother."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly alarmed and asked, "What happened?"

Zhao Ya did not reply him directly but said with a troubled

look, "They do not understand that after the battle of Changping, what Imperial brother fear most is others telling him he has made a mistake. Now Li Mu is obviously trying to force Imperial brother to admit that he has slipped up in the matter of Sister Ni and blaming him for covering up for the suspected murderer, so how will he be willing to accept this."

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brow, "What actually happened?"

Zhao Ya looked at him and said, "After the feast last night, Zhao Mu entered the Palace immediately to look for Imperial brother, but no one knows what he told him. Most likely he's blaming the military for using this opportunity to create chaos and to shake Imperial brother's hold on the throne; naturally he won't have anything good to say about you either."

Only now did Xiang Shaolong understand the term a muddleheaded ruler will bring downfall to the country. When power is concentrated in the hands of one person, this person will become the key to success or failure. Although the modern democratic system is full of cons, but it's a hundred times better than having a muddle headed ruler controlling the life and death of everyone.

Zhao Ya continued, "This morning Imperial brother summoned me and asked me in detail about you and forced me to reveal my real relationship with you. I almost could not handle the questionings."

Xiang Shaolong asked in shock, "How did you answer him?"

Zhao Ya started to look a little unnatural as she replied, "Of course I won't reveal the truth, but it seems that he still believes that I am not enamored of you, or maybe because my reputation in the past was just too bad!"

After she spoke she lowered her pretty face, looking troubled.

Xiang Shaolong pinched her chin and lifted up her pretty face, saying, "Now I'm involved with the military and the Wu family, two important factions, your Imperial brother won't dare to do anything against me rashly!"

Zhao Ya exclaimed miserably, "I'm worried to death! You must not overestimate the power of the military and the Wu family. If Imperial brother ignores everything and execute you immediately, by then it'll be too late and no one will really come to a face to face confrontation with Imperial brother over you."

A fury welled up within Xiang Shaolong as he said with an icy laugh, "Want to kill me, I'm afraid King Xiaocheng will need to mobilize his army to do that, I will not let myself be caught so easily."

Zhao ya pouted, "Sometimes you're really like a person with all brawn and no brains. Just Imperial brother's personal guards alone total 20,000. There are about 30,000 soldiers guarding the city and the commander Le Cheng is Zhao Mu's man. If something happens, who can save you? If something were to happen to you, how can I continue living?"

As she finished her sentence, hot tears flowed out, obviously she is extremely worried and frightened, but it seems that there's something else as well.

Xiang Shaolong gathered her into his arms and said with a smile, "Don't worry! Someone has once said that I am the new saint who will face many dangers, so I definitely won't die."

Zhao Ya was stunned, "Who said that? What is a new saint?"

She paused and continued without interest, "I am at a loss right now and feeling very troubled. Shaolong teach me quickly what I should do."

Xiang Shaolong was silent for a moment before replying, "Now there's not much choice left, only by escaping from Handan will we have a chance of survival. But before we leave I must tear that Zhao Mu into pieces before the hatred in my heart can be appeased."

Zhao Ya caressed his cheeks lovingly, "You must promise to bring Ya'er with you!"

Xiang Shaolong said with surety, "That is of course, not only will I bring you, Xiao Pan and Qian'er will come with us as well."

Zhao ya asked quietly, "Are we going to Qin. Hai! The Qins are even more frightening than the people from other states!"

Xiang Shaolong said with a laugh, "Don't forget I am the new saint."

He stood up and continued, "I'm afraid I will only have time to accompany all of you after we reach Qin. King Xiaocheng's reaction is totally beyond my expectations. I have to look for Li Mu immediately to discuss this and try to mollify your Imperial brother's feelings."

Zhao Ya accompanied him out and said, "I will be in charge of keeping an eye of the situation in the palace. Luckily Empress Jing is on your side speaking up for you and Imperial brother is still wavering. So for the time being he would not dare to use such harsh methods to deal with you yet."

As she finished her words she suddenly lowered her pretty face, a look of unfathomable confusion flashed past her pretty eyes.

Of course Xiang Shaolong did not see that, but he just felt troubled.

Zou Yan may really believe that he is some new saint, but he knows that there's no such thing at all.

If there is a new saint, it should be Ying Zheng.

But the Ying Zheng now, how he can be the new saint who unifies the world?

Xiang Shaolong greatly misses the high tech weapons he used in the 21st century.

In this era, even the most formidable swordsman can only deal with a dozen odd people but not a hundred odd people, much less thousands of well trained soldiers.

Therefore he can only use strategies and tactics so that he will have a chance to preserve his life and escape.

Suddenly, he felt as if he can't bear to leave Handan.

It's finally time to leave this great ancient city.

CHAPTER 5
Secret Discussion Of The Grand Plan
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG came to Li Mu's Great General Residence in Handan. Over a thousand men and horses were gathered in the open area within the walls, all decked out as if they are about to leave immediately.

Xiang Shaolong's heart sunk and when the guard took him to see Li Mu, Li Mu happened to walk out from the building, all dressed in his military attire. When he saw Xiang Shaolong, he pulled him aside and said, "There's no hope for Great Zhao. His Majesty summoned me to the palace today and

wants me to return to the northern border immediately to deal with the Xiong Nus. He did not give me a chance to bring up Zhao Ni's matter at all and even said openly that Zhao Mu will be in charge of Handan. You better leave quickly! Or else you might lose your life."

King Xiaocheng's reaction is obviously beyond the expectations of this famed general.

Li Mu continued in a low voice, "A lot of commanders within Handan used to be my subordinates. I have told them about you and instructed them to help you secretly."

He then told him a few names.

He added, "If Zhao Mu sends people to go after you, you can escape to the northern border. As long as you're within my region of power, I will have a way to protect you and even his Majesty can't do anything about that."

Xiang Shaolong did not expect that this person whom he has only met three times would actually have such strong feelings of friendship and chivalrous. He was so touched that he was at a loss for words.

Li Mu removed his sword and pressed it to him, "This sword is called 'Blood Wave' and a lot more times better than Flying Rainbow. It can cut a flying strand of hair and slice through enemy's armor like air. With your out of the world swordplay, having this would be akin to adding wings to a tiger. Do not reject. Or else I will look down on you."

Hot tears streamed out from Xiang Shaolong's eyes as he

received this precious sword with the frightening name.

Li Mu patted his shoulder and said, "Wherever can accommodate you, just go to that place! Maybe one day we will meet on the battlefield and by then we're serving different masters and we may have to fight to the death. I will definitely not give way and you must do the same to me as well."

After he finished his words he laughed loudly, with seemingly unending sadness and bravery. He then got up his horse and left his residence, towards his journey north.

Xiang Shaolong's feelings were mixed as he looked at him numbly and for a moment felt all alone in the world.

He took the sword out for a look and saw on the especially long and shiny sword, there seems to be red lines on the body, looking like waves.

On the pommel of the sword were the words 'Blood Wave' written in the ancient form.

The joy from last night has suddenly flown away without a trace and the only thing he can do now is to rely on his own intelligence and ability and make sure that the Wu family and those that he love will be able to leave this lawless place safely.

Xiang Shaolong left the Great General Residence feeling at a loss.

Without a highly respected man like Li Mu handling the situation, no matter how unhappy the military is with Zhao

Mu, they would not dare to risk the lives of their whole clan and speak up about Zhao Ni's case, and no one will dare to stand on his side. He has no wish to implicate others too, so now he can only rely on the Wu family and himself.

Li Mu has been ordered to return to the northern border, the military world in the state of Zhao all knows clearly the King's wishes, which is to stand on the same side as Zhao Mu. And he, Xiang Shaolong, is Zhao Mu's biggest thorn in the flesh so naturally he will have difficulty keeping himself alive.

Not many will be willing to help others in distress, but there'll be a lot of people who will gladly rub salt into wound, because they can strike a blow to the Wu family and at the same time ingratiate themselves with Zhao Mu.

Now the biggest question is, when will Zhao Mu gain the King of Zhao's agreement to get rid of the Wu family and Xiang Shaolong?

Is there a way to delay the King of Zhao from making this decision?

Just as he returned to the Wu fortress feeling troubled, Tao Fang came up and said, "That Chu person called Dan Jin has been captured and locked in our jail. However this is a very stubborn person and refused to talk at all. Now we're waiting to see what you suggest, maybe we might have to torture him seriously."

Xiang Shaolong seems to see a ray of hope and asked, "Have you searched his bags?"

Tao Fang sighed, "It's just some unimportant stuff. With Zhao Mu's cunningness, he will never let others catch hold of him so easily."

He continued, "Even if this person is willing to cooperate obediently and stand out to testify against Zhao Mu, Zhao Mu can still push all blame away and instead point out that we're accusing him. Hai! Do you think King Xiaocheng will believe his man or us?"

Xiang Shaolong quietly sighed, "As long as we know clearly the relationship between Zhao Mu and the Chus, we'll be able to set a trap for him. That's why we cannot let go of this clue so easily."

By now the two of them have arrived at the back courtyard and entered a secret doorway in a building into the heavily guarded underground jail.

That Chu spy Dan Jin was tied on a wooden pillar, blood and dirt on his face, looking dispirited. Obviously he has suffered and he lowered his head without saying anything.

Although Xiang Shaolong pities him, but there's no other choice. This is like a war; to be lenient towards an enemy is akin to committing suicide.

Xiang Shaolong suddenly has an idea and pulled Tao Fang aside, "This person is obviously one who is not afraid of death, or else the Chus won't have sent him here to be in charge of such an important mission. But there is a limit to anyone's tolerance, as long as we can find that, we can destroy his will."

Tao Fang said with exasperation, "The question is what way?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "This method is called relentless questioning. Find another 10 odd people and keep on asking him repeated questions. Do not allow him toilet breaks or food and most importantly do not let him sleep. During questioning you must use strong light and shine it into his face. I'll want to see how long he can hold on."

This is the first time Tao Fang has heard of such a questioning method and asked doubtfully, "Will it really work?"

Xiang Shaolong replied with certainty, "I guarantee it will. Get someone to deal with the injuries on his body first, give him some clean clothes to change into and you can proceed."

He then told him some techniques on questioning and things to ask, making Tao Fang think that it all sounds very feasible before he left to look for Wu Yingyuan.

Wu Yingyuan is receiving a guest in the secret room and when he knows he has come, immediately invited him in.

He is a totally non-descript merchant, tall but with a dreadful face, his looks doesn't look appealing at all.

After Wu Yingyuan invited Xiang Shaolong for a seat, he said, "Shaolong! This is Mister Tu's most reliable man who has the reputation of being a resourceful strategist Mister Xiao Yuetan."

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself, so this is the secret envoy sent by Lu Buwei's number 1 headman, Tu Xian. So from this it seems that Lu Buwei is going all out to send Zhu Ji and her son back to Xianyang in the shortest time possible.

Xiao Yuetan is quite polite and said, "Before I came to Handan, I've already heard the great name of Master Xiang. Please do not be offended, but my face now is a fake one but due to uncontrollable circumstances, I cannot see others with my real looks."

Xiang Shaolong suddenly realized that this person is an expert in disguise, and no flaws could be seen at all on the surface. He had an idea and said, "So it means that Mister can turn the Crown Prince and his mother into any looks."

Xiao Yuetan nodded his head, "Master Xiang's train of thought is very quick. This is exactly one of the reason Master Tu send me here to Handan. But as for sneaking them out, it will have to depend on all of you."

Xiang Shaolong was about to say that it's not difficult at all to sneak them out but Wu Yingyuan gave him a kick under the table so he hurriedly swallowed his words.

Wu Yingyuan interrupted, "If we can save mother and son, how will Mister Lu receive us on his end?"

Only now did Xiang Shaolong suddenly realize that with their abilities, and with Xiao Yuetan's skills for disguise, it's not a problem saving mother and son at all. The difficulty is that the Wu family is all going to run away at the same time. That's why Wu Yingyuan is linking Ying Zheng and his mother

with the Wu family in order to force Lu Buwei to receive them as well.

Indeed Wu Yingyuan added, "The Hostage Residence is heavily guarded and ever since King Zhuangxiang ascended the throne, a troop of Imperial Guards have been stationed permanently in the residence. The city of Handan's strict security is also famed throughout the land so other than a forceful attack, there is no other way. But Mister Xiao need not worry; we have already made plans and can guarantee that we will send both mother and son out of the city without any danger to them."

Xiang Shaolong knows that he is exaggerating, there's no grand plan to save them yet but if it was him, he can only do the same thing as well and lie to gain the other party's trust.

Xiao Yuetan replied, "My Master has discussed this matter with King Zhuangxiang. When the time comes our army will pretend to attack Prince Taiyuan and attempt to take over the city to lure the Zhao's attention while Master Tu will personally lead a troop of elite soldiers and infiltrate into the Zhao border to receive you. As long as you can reach the western bank of Northern Liaoyang's lake, Master Tu will be able to escort you past the borders of Wei and Han back to our country."

He paused and asked, "Can I first listen to your marvelous plan."

Xiang Sholong secretly thought him formidable. He has said so many things, but in actual fact he did not reveal at all the

position and route of the elite troops Tu Xian is leading, because if they are to work in tandem, Tu Xian should already be within Zhao borders.

Wu Yingyuan kicked him under the table again. Obviously he wants him to immediately present a nonexistent plan to deal with this esteemed guest.

Xiang Shaolong has no plans at all, so he pretended to be mysterious and said, "Can Mister Xiao wait for three days? Because the most important factor in the plan is to make contact with the mother and son and I am still in the midst of arranging this matter. Only after I get some headway on this, I can make final confirmations on the other details."

Xiao Yuetan said a little unhappily, "At least you should reveal a little information to me?"

Xiang Shaolong said calmly, "Your appearance may lead to changes to the whole plan. We may even make use of your skill of disguise to let us leave Handan without anyone even realizing it. That's why we need to make new arrangements."

Xiao Yuetan's expression looks a little more soothed as he said, "I understand a little now!"

He turned towards Wu Yingyuan and said, "I heard that the dace courtesans in the Wu family are famous throughout the land, how can I miss that."

Wu Yingyuan chortled, "I've made arrangements for you long ago!"

Xiang Shaolong knows that he's no longer needed so he slipped out.

As soon as he stepped out of Wu Yingyuan's inner residence, Xiang Shaolong felt extremely fatigued. The fortress is peaceful in the afternoon. In the garden the maids and children were playing ball, with waves of laughter. The snow on the ground has already been swept clean but icicles still hung on the tree branches.

When he walked past, the prettier maids were making eyes and flirting with him, hoping to gain his attention.

But this man who has always been flirtatious only felt a sense of sadness.

Although Wu Yingyuan said that he will move most of the people out of Zhao earlier, but everyone knows that it only means the closest and direct family members, as for the distant relatives and these maids in front of him here, they will all be heartlessly deserted and ultimately become the object of the Zhao people's wrath.

This is a helpless matter even Xiang Shaolong can do nothing about it.

In this era where men vie with one another, a person's fate is not controlled in his own hands.

Heaven will suddenly turn into horrible hell!

He is not worried that Lu Buwei will betray them. In this unstable land with constant wars, the Wu family's livestock business is extremely important to the military and

economy. With the formidable father and son team in the Wu family, they will certainly spread out part of their resources and won't leave anything to the Zhaos. That will be a fatal blow to the state of Zhao and they will find it even more difficult to survive. This is also the retribution of the King of Zhao.

Wu Yingyuan is a strategist, and has already planning everything quietly since a few years ago. Just looking at how he has taken a liking to him and married his most beloved daughter to him, is enough to proof how bold and far sighted he is.

Only this kind of person can live happily in a world like this.

Whistling was heard from behind.

Before he even have a chance to turn his head back for a look, Jing Jun is already next to him like a gust of wind, his attitude relaxed.

Xiang Shaolong asked curiously, "Succeeded?"

Naturally he's asking about Zhao Zhi.

Jing Jun shook his head happily and said nonchalantly, "She kept on ignoring me, in the end I followed her home but she chased me away with her sword."

Xiang Shaolong was surprised, "Then I really cannot guess why you can still be so happy now!"

Jing Jun chuckled, "The interesting thing is that her father is actually a school teacher. He came out and reprimanded me

sternly, saying a whole lot of things about see no evil and speak no evil or words to that meaning. Actually I didn't hear a single word he said, but on the account of his pretty daughter, I pretended to accept his teachings and lowered my head. Maybe he saw that I should be good in studies, he actually said something about teachings, and told me to go to school everyday and learn the ways of being a man. I just have to give him some smoked meat during the New Year or major festivals. Hee! At that time Zhao Zhi was almost mad with fury and kept staring at me, but there's nothing she can do at all. Brother Xiang don't you think this is exciting?"

Xiang Shaolong shook his head and laughed. To be harassed by someone like Jing Jun, Miss Zhao Zhi is going to be in trouble. She can't win him in fights nor can she chase him away, how is she going to deal with him?"

Jing Jun asked, "Where has Brother Teng gone?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "He has a special task and has gone to the farm outside the city."

As he said this, he suddenly had an idea and asked, "Is there a way to make thousands of warhorses suddenly feel weak in the legs and unable to walk?"

Jing Jun furrowed his brows, "Just have to feed them some herbs, but if the quantity is too huge, it might be a little difficult."

Xiang Shaolong thought that he should be asking Wu Yingyuan this, since the Wu family has been in the livestock business for generations. No one would be more

experienced than them.

Jing Jun said excitedly, "Is there anything you want me to do!"

Xiang Shaolong shook his head, "Just go and study in peace! But remember Brother Teng's instructions. Ddon't go overboard, we still have to go to the Hostage Residence tonight."

Jing Jun gave a reply and left laughingly.

Xiang Shaolong stepped into his Hidden Dragon Abode and only thought of having a good sleep, not wanting to think of anything else.

When he woke up, it's already dusk.

Xiang Shaolong regained his spirit and he felt more optimistic and energetic as well.

Naturally Wu Tingfang and the rest served him meticulously.

Chunying and the rest of the maids looked a little upset. Naturally they were blaming him for not having had his way with them today yet.

He can only laugh bitterly in his heart. His stamina may be a lot better than the average person, but resources are still limited and although the four ladies are young, beautiful and alluring. But more important matters are at hand so he can only suppress his urge.

During dinnertime, Lady Ya's loyal servant Zhao Da actually came looking for him.

Xiang Shaolong thought that Zhao Ya has something urgent so he hurriedly put down his bowl and chopsticks and invited him into the inner chamber.

Zhao Da has a strange expression and it was only after a while that he said, "Lady has no idea that I've come here to look for you."

Xiang Shaolong felt that something is very wrong and asked sincerely, "Just say it out boldly! I will be responsible for you."

Zhao Da said, "Actually for servants like us, we have no right to interfere in Lady's affairs at all. But in our hearts, the few of us brothers have already viewed you as the Master who is most worthy of our loyalty. Therefore we can't be too concerned about other matters now!"

All the more Xiang Shaolong felt that something is amiss and egged him to reveal the purpose of his visit.

Zhao Da made up his mind bravely and said somberly, "After Lady returned, in less than a month, a person called Qi Yu who is a royalty from the state of Qi came to Handan as an envoy. This person looks even more handsome than Lian Jin, and famed in Qi for his intellect and swordsmanship. He's also an expert with the ladies. But after he arrived in Zhao, he seems to be smitten with Lady and was pursuing her relentlessly. His Majesty and Zhao Mu also kept creating chances for him to meet with Lady and it seems that Lady is a little interested in him too."

Xiang Shaolong was relieved on hearing that, he is very

confident of himself in this aspect and he also does not believe that Zhao Ya, who has gone through difficult times with him, would have a change of feelings so easily.

Zhao Da looked at his expression and said anxiously, "There are some things which I must say even if I don't wish to. After Lady came back, she missed you so terribly that she has no appetite at all, and there were constant rumors in the city about your death. That Qi Yu took the opportunity and spent a few nights in Lady's room. It was only after your return that Lady kept her distance from him but he came last night again to harass Lady and only left this morning. Us brothers had a discussion before deciding to come and inform you."

Xiang Shaolong's heart froze immediately. With Zhao Ya's sluttish character, in such a situation where she was pining for him, she really needs the consolation and excitement of other men in order to rid herself of the pain and loneliness.

Humans are not without feelings. Such matters between men and women, once started will be difficult to break off, especially when this Qi Yu is not any worse than him. That's why Zhao Ya is still being tangled up with him right now.

Hai!

A slut is always a slut. It may be something to do with the hormones in her body, to ask her not to have a man for a long period of time will be a very difficult matter.

A feeling of pained betrayal welled up in him.

Zhao Da lowered his voice and said, "If Lady is just having fun with that man, we won't do something so unscrupulous as to tell on her. We are extremely gratuitous towards Lady and are willing to die for her. But we're afraid that not only is she being cheated of her feelings and body, there might be something else and if it harms you, it won't be worth it."

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, "What is it all about?"

Zhao Da said painfully, "We have been secretly checking on this Qi Yu and realized that every time after he meets Lady, he will immediately sneak over to see Zhao Mu."

Xiang Shaolong was utterly shocked, "What?"

Zhao Da's eyes reddened as he lowered his head, his hands clenched tightly into fists. Obviously his heart is filled with fury and regret.

To him, Xiang Shaolong is a trustworthy hero and only he can be a match for Lady Ya whereas Zhao Mu is a person everyone in Handan hates, so one can imagine his feelings right now.

Xiang Shaolong slowly understood.

This lure of using handsome man is truly formidable!

If Zhao Mu can control Zhao Ya again, then on their side no one will be able to leave Handan and it will also be the end of Zhu Ji and her son. Because Zhao Ya is extremely familiar with all their movements and secrets.

But it seems that although Zhao Ya is still being tangled up

with Qi Yu, she has not betrayed him yet. Thinking of her distressing expression today as she told him to take her away from Zhao, and yet afraid that the Qins would be unreliable, he can understand her feelings of uncertainty. After all, the King of Zhao still dotes on her a lot. Will she really be willing to betray King Xiaocheng?

She wanted to leave the state of Zhao mainly because there is no hope for the state and she does not wish to end up being in a destroyed state, and Qi Yu can give her protection, bringing her back to the state of Qi, which is separated from the Qins by the state of Zhao.

Obviously there is a secret agreement between Qi and Chu and they will go through all means to stop the three states from joining, to the extent that they will split the three states among themselves. Therefore Zhao Mu was able to invite Xiao Weimou to deal with him and now he can ask the expert in love to snatch his beloved away from him.

Naturally the King of Zhao is backing this up because he does not want Zhao Ya to get involved with the Wu family, and at the same time he wants to make use of Zhao Ya to understand the Wu family's secrets and when the time is ripe, he will exterminate the Wu family from the roots and take over all the livestock farm, getting rid of this thorn in his flesh.

Xiang Shaolong's train of thought kept expanding, and thought that maybe the King of Zhao may also be a participant in Zhao Ni's incident, because Xiao Pan once said

that they fell into a deep sleep after eating the snacks the King sent them.

The King of Zhao allowed Zhao Mu to do this because he thought that Lady Ni gave herself to Xiang Shaolong only because she could not tolerate the loneliness. Therefore as long as Zhao Mu can give her the same enjoyment, they will be able to win her back. They did not expect Zhao Ni to be so fiercely protective of her chastity that she actually committed suicide after being raped.

With such comprehension, everything that he did not understand in the past now seems to fall into place.

The reason why Zhao Mu can single handedly cover up the case of Zhao Ni's death is because he had the approval of the King of Zhao. He did not want to reveal his own part in the evil deed so he'd rather offend Li Mu and forcefully suppressed this matter.

He has truly given up on the state of Zhao.

On his revenge name list, the King of Zhao's name has been added.

Now the most problematic matter is Zhao Ya. Has she fallen too deeply with Qi Yu?

No wonder the King of Zhao handed Zhao Qian so readily to her.

But is it possible Empress Jing is also putting on an act? Deliberately luring him to assassinate Zhao Mu so that the King of Zhao will have an excuse to execute the Wu family.

Once he thought of this, he can't help but feel cold sweat running down his back.

Zhao Da asked, "Master! What should we do now?"

Xiang Shaolong sighed and said, "You will just pretend that you don't know anything about this at all, and from now on don't follow or carry any investigations about Qi Yu. This is extremely important, understand?"

Zhao Da nodded his head, wanting to say something but stopping himself.

Xiang Shaolong thought of a matter and asked, "All of you are so loyal towards your Lady, but aren't you going to tell her when you obviously know that Qi Yu has been going to see Zhao Mu?"

Zhao Da replied, "We told her long ago but was instead reprimanded, saying that Qi Yu is the envoy from Qi, so naturally Zhao Mu will have to make him feel welcome. She even said she will not let us off lightly if we continue to follow Qi Yu."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly alarmed, it seems that Qi Yu has really enticed this fickle minded slut; why else would she not allow Zhao Da to continue his investigations.

If he can snatch her away from Lian Jin's hands, of course others can snatch her away from his hands. This is very fair.

Besides, with Lady Ya giving out favors so readily in the past proves that she always like to try new things.

Zhao Da could not take it any longer and said, "If Lady really allies herself with Qi Yu, we all hope that we can come and follow you instead."

With Zhao Da's loyalty, to actually say such words that betray his master, obviously shows how disappointed and upset they are towards Zhao Ya.

Zhao Ya has already betrayed him once, will history repeat itself again.

When she knows that there's no hope of escape, will she betray him again because of Qi Yu and her own interest?

Xiang Shaolong felt extreme fury and said quietly, "One day, if I can really become someone important, I will be most happy to accept all of you if you come and look for me."

Zhao Da thanked him happily before leaving.

Xiang Shaolong was feeling troubled, his mind in a blank, not wanting to think at all.

The ladies all saw his strange expression and hurriedly asked him for the reason.

How can he tell them his worries, so he hardened his heart and said, "Chunying, all of you go and prepare hot water, I want all of you to accompany me in the pool."

Chunying and the rest all understands what he is referring to and their pretty faces blushed immediately, but they cannot conceal their happiness as they all rushed towards the pool.

Xiang Shaolong forced his spirits up and secretly thought

that he will face problems as they come. He's not afraid of anyone at all.

At this moment what he needs the most is excitement, so that his spirit can be released from feelings of despair and anger.

The stronger person will conquer.

Fine!

Let me, Xiang Shaolong, see who is the stronger person.

CHAPTER 6
The Real And Fake Ying Zheng
[Translated by JEAN]

AS the northern wind blew, Xiang Shaolong and Jing Jun climbed over walls quietly, avoiding the patrols and gantry posts and arrived at the garden outside Zhu Ji's building.

Jing Jun stayed behind as a look out while Xiang Shaolong took the familiar route to the window on the second floor, pushed it gently, and the window opened immediately.

Zhu Ji's voice called out quietly from inside, "Is it Shaolong? Come in quickly!"

Xiang Shaolong slipped in through the window.

Zhu Ji hurriedly closed the window, turned around and leaned on the window ledge. Her chest heaving, obviously she is feeling very nervous.

Only a weak, lone lamp was shining in the room but because it's placed on the corner of the window ledge, it will not reflect their shadows on the papered window.

The lamp emphasized half of the right side of Zhu Ji's body while her left side was cast in the shadows, making her dainty and voluptuous body look all the more dimensional and extremely alluring.

A stove was lit in the room, making it as warm as spring, which is why although Zhu Ji was thinly dressed, she still felt comfortable.

Her pretty eyes burned like fire, with a warmth that can scald as they stared unwaveringly at Xiang Shaolong, as if she's trying to scrutinize him inside out.

This is the first time Xiang Shaolong has met such a bold and wild character, a woman who is not afraid of men at all and his heart can't help but beat faster but on the surface he looked at her coolly.

This is definitely not a simple woman.

Zhu Ji's lips quivered slightly as she asked, "Xiang Shaolong! Can I trust you?"

Xiang Shaolong smiled slightly, "It seems that Lady has no other choice!"

Zhu Ji's pretty eyes stared at him, "Even if I can trust you, but what ability do you have that will enable you to take me and my son away."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought, "Since I can infiltrate into this place, naturally I can bring you out."

He was about to blurt this out when he suddenly felt that something was amiss and changed his words, "This is the reason why I came to discuss with Lady, because I guessed that Zhao Mu will certainly gather all his men at the Hostage Residence."

Zhu Ji nodded her head, "You're very astute, no wonder Zhao Mu is so wary of you. Every time they talk about you, I will listen very carefully. I did not expect Buwei to actually find you, it's really great."

Xiang Shaolong heard that when she was talking about Lu Buwei, she seems to be talking about a stranger and was secretly startled. It seems that she will not be loyal to any man. Men are making use of her; she is also making use of men.

He furrowed his brows and asked, "How is the situation at the Crown Prince's side?"

Zhu Ji sighed lightly, "Unless you can lead a huge army and successfully attack Handan City, or else you can forget about taking him away. Ever since my husband ascended the throne, Zhao Mu has transferred 200 highly skilled warriors who are constantly by his side day and night on rotation shifts. He also added high walls outside, making it a

residence within a residence. Also, there is a troop of almost a thousand soldiers who have been posted here permanently to guard. Unless you can turn into a bird, or else you can forget about infiltrating that place to see him.”

Xiang Shaolong’s brows furrowed deeply on hearing this. When Wu Yingyuan was telling Xiao Yuetan about how heavily guarded the Hostage Residence is today. He was not exaggerating, instead he even ‘understated’ the real situation.

Zhu Ji continued nonchalantly, “Besides it’s no use even if he is saved. Zhao Mu is an expert in using drugs and has given him s strange herb and he must take the antidote regularly to ensure his safety. If there’s no antidote, he will die of poisoning in less than 10 days.”

Xiang Shaolong feels as if his whole spine has been frozen into an ice pillar.

Oh, my gosh! Is this going to be the future Emperor Qin?

This time he is really stuck between a rock and a hard place, unable to advance or retreat at all. And he thought that saving mother and son would only require the lifting of a finger, he is really too naive.

He breathed out a gush of cold air, “By keeping the Crown Prince like this, besides giving vent to their anger, what other good does it do to the Zhaos?”

Zhu Ji said lightly, “You should have heard of Zhao Mu’s nefarious plot, to deliberately use wine and women to make

him into a useless person. To tell the truth, Zhao Mu can't wait to send him back to become the King of Qin. But the time is not yet ripe, because Lu Buwei will stand to gain from it, do you understand?"

Of course Xiang Shaolong understands. The reason why Lu Buwei is so anxious to send mother and son back to Xianyang is because he wants to strengthen his relationship with King Zhuangxiang.

At this instant he finally realized that when Zhu Ji was talking about her son, she only said 'he' and did not address him in any other form or utter his name directly. He tone was so indifferent that it's scary and for a moment he can't help but feel perplexed.

Zhu Ji suddenly said with hatred, "It's better that this lad is dead, I get furious for no reason just at the sight of him."

Xiang Shaolong was stunned. People said that no matter how vicious a tiger is, it will not eat its offspring. Why would Zhu Ji curse her precious son who can make her become the Empress Dowager?

Zhu Ji moved over, took his hand and pulled him as she walled towards the bed and said gently, "Come! Let's continue the conversation on the bed!"

Firstly, Xiang Shaolong is totally not in the mood; and secondly, he just had a wild time with Chunying and the maids and is still tired and thirdly. He remembered the advice not to have any amorous relationship with this woman whom both Lu Buwei and King Zhuangxiang was

enamored with so he immediately slipped his hand away and grabbed hers, saying "I'm afraid this is not a suitable time and place!"

Zhu Ji pouted, "Don't you think I know? It's just that those maids have been ordered to come and check on me every once in a while. It's a lot safer hiding in the bed."

Xiang Shaolong thought that he has misunderstood her so he hurriedly followed her into the curtained bed and immediately a fragrance wafted into his nose.

Zhu Ji told him to lie down inside and used the blanket to cover the both of them. She turned around and snuggled into his arms and hugged him tightly, her tiny mouth going up to his ears and whispered, "I want to tell you a huge secret, but first you must make a blood oath not to tell anyone else before I can let you know. Hai! I have no other choice but to tell you as well. I am not allowed to take even a step out of this place and there's no one I can trust."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly surprised, what secret can be so great that he needs to make a blood oath?

He answered, "I, Xiang Shaolong, am a man of my words. Once I've made a promise, I won't go back on my words, Lady can rest assured."

Zhu Ji said with relief, "I know you are a trustworthy man, but I am still worried, so why don't you just give in to me!"

With a beauty besieging him like this, he has no choice but to make a blood oath. At the same time he was secretly

laughing, he doesn't even believe a blood oath will become true, so what restriction can this promise do to him? But since he's made the promise, he will not reveal it so readily.

Zhu Ji was hesitant for a moment before saying quietly, "The child they imprisoned is not my son at all."

Xiang Shaolong almost shrieked in surprise.

Heavens! What is this all about?

Before Zhu Ji has a chance to talk further, there was a knock on the door and the maid outside asked, "Is Lady asleep? His Marquis is here!"

Xiang Shaolong was terribly startled and was about to jump up when Zhu Ji pressed him down. She extended her hand and pushed on a decoration at the front of her bed and the place where Xiang Shaolong was lying on immediately became a movable board and he was flipped to a secret compartment under the bed.

In that instant, instead of lying in the warm blankets on the bed above, Xiang Shaolong is now lying in the secret compartment beneath which only has a blanket as a base. Luckily there are holes for ventilation so he has no lack of air.

The door opened and Zhao Mu's voice said, "Beauty, I've come to visit you!"

Zhu Ji replied, "Marquis looks so energetic today, something good must have happened today to make you so happy. I am so happy for you as well!"

At this moment Xiang Shaolong, who is hiding in the secret compartment, guessed that where he is lying must be the personal secret compartment of that 'adulterer' Guo Kai. After hearing what she said he has to compliment Zhu Ji for knowing how to make a man feel good.

Later he could 'feel' Zhao and Zhu sitting down on the bed, followed by kissing sounds and Zhu Ji's alluring 'moans' and panting.

After a moment, Zhao Mu smiled, "I heard that your lover Lu has sent Tu Xian to come to Handan to save you. Are you happy, beauty?"

Zhu Ji pouted, "Don't you know my heart? Without you, I am not going anywhere, besides it's only a rumor! Who would be so stupid as to come here on a death mission?"

Xiang Shaolong who is below was secretly thinking that she's formidable because Zhu Ji is obviously trying to test Zhao Mu's news.

Indeed Zhao Mu gave a cold snort, "How can it be a rumor, now the old officials of Qin are in a fierce fight with Lu Buwei and wants him to bear the responsibility of the death of the previous King. I'm afraid even your King Zhuangxiang won't be able to protect him. Once Lu Buwei is dead, I will naturally send you and your son back to Xianyang, by then do not forget about me."

Although Zhao Mu did not say anything, but Xiang Shaolong and Zhu Ji both guessed that the news must have come from the powerful Qin officials who want to topple Lu Buwei.

The fights between the Qin court and the local control for power have now widened.

The main battlefield is in the Qin court while the side battle is being fought at Handan.

An originally very simple matter has now become extremely complicated; especially what Zhu Ji said earlier, it extremely unexpected and earth shattering.

Zhu Ji threw a tantrum and said, “Not going back! Not going back! I am definitely not going back. Just let Zheng’er go back, I want to stay here with you.”

Even Xiang Shaolong below was dumbfounded on hearing that. How can she sound so sincere and real, if she’s in the 21st century, she’ll definitely be a superstar in the entertainment industry.

Zhao Mu was totally taken in and they started kissing again, followed by the sounds of Zhao Mu removing their robes and the lecherous laughter and moans of the coupling between a man and a woman. Xiang Shaolong can only lament on his bad luck down below. If they start to have fun on the bed, he will feel even worse.

If he wants to kill Zhao Mu now, it’ll be as easy as lifting a finger, but of course he won’t be so stupid as to do that.

Luckily Zhao Mu is still in the mood for talking so he stopped Zhu Ji’s attack and said, “The reason I’m so happy today is because that slut Zhao Ya has finally fallen into my trap and unable to pull herself out of it. No one understands her more

than I do. Not only does she hanker after wealth and riches, she also loves the new and will discard the old. But she's been giving special treatment to Xiang Shaolong. Luckily I still have a killer move, which King Xiaocheng is using their relationship as siblings and by telling her on the pros and cons, there's no way she will not submit."

Xiang Shaolong's heart sunk to the bottom. It's the end! Zhao Ya has really betrayed him. He wonders how much about him has she revealed to her imperial brother. Luckily in order not to cause her undue worry, he did not tell her a lot of things, or else the outcome would be unthinkable.

Zhu Ji asked deliberately, "Why are you talking about Xiang Shaolong all the time with such hatred, what has he got to do with me? I am not interested in him at all."

How would Zhao Mu know that this sly woman is testing him, or maybe he won't put his guard up against a beauty who has lost her freedom, so he said lightly, "How can there be no relation? The Wu family has always been in contact with Lu Buwei and Xiang Shaolong is the grandson-in-law of the Wu family. If Lu Buwei wants to sneak people out, he'll obviously need the help of the Wu family."

He paused and continued with a cold snort, "Xiang Shaolong better not end up in my hands, or else I'll make him regret that he was ever born. You shall watch at the side when I torture him!"

Xiang Shaolong who was hiding beneath was gritting his teeth on hearing it and wished he can jump out and kill him.

Of course Zhu Ji knows that Xiang Shaolong is listening so she can't help but laugh and ask, "How can that inexperienced lad win you? He'll end up in your hands sooner or later, and you can do what you want with him."

Apparently Zhao Mu got excited on hearing it and said, "Come! Get up the bed!"

At least Zhu Ji has some conscience and she objected, "You come looking for me in the middle of the night and now you've made me hungry, where I can find the mood."

Obviously Zhao Mu is totally enthralled by her and hurriedly summoned the servants to prepare snacks for her before saying with satisfaction, "No one in Zhao dares to offend me now. As soon as I exterminate the Wu family from the roots, no one else will dare to do anything without my approval."

Zhu Ji flattered him and said gently, "I think Xiang Shaolong must be a total idiot, or else why would he think that Zhao Ya who is famous in the world for being a slut would be loyal to him?"

Xiang Shaolong can only laugh bitterly, these few words of Zhu Ji are obviously meant as a free gift for him.

Zhao Mu did not expect that there is a twist to all this and replied seriously, "You're wrong! Zhao Ya has indeed given her true feelings to Xiang Shaolong, that's why she's still helping him hide a lot of things. But I understand her too well, so there's no way she can win me. If she doesn't want to die together with Xiang Shaolong, she'll have to work with me obediently."

He sighed comfortably and said, "Not only is Xiang Shaolong not an idiot, he's very formidable as well. If not for Zhao Ya this weak link, it'll still be uncertain who will win in the end."

Xiang Shaolong thought of one thing and was sweating immediately.

If Zhao Qian told Zhao Ya about how Ji Yanran and Zou Yan saved them in Daliang, and she told Zhao Mu, then Ji Yanran and Zou Yan will be in big danger.

At this time the maids came to inform that the food is ready. Zhao Mu and Zhu Ji went out of the room.

What better time to leave than now?

Xiang Shaolong secretly thanked heavens and slipped away.

Zhao Qian tossed and turned in bed, unable to get to sleep.

Without Xiang Shaolong next to her, she felt lost and alone.

She then thought of Zhao Pan. This child who has lost his mother is slowly becoming frighteningly melancholy. Only when he's with her or Xiang Shaolong he will show a little naivety and happiness, and he won't even give any face to Zhao Ya.

If he has shown himself to be a little weaker, maybe Zhao Qian will feel better.

Right at this time, the curtains were suddenly lifted and she was about to scream when she heard Xiang Shaolong's familiar voice call out, "Qian'er! It's Shaolong!"

Zhao Qian never expected her beloved would appear next to her bed in the middle of the night and threw herself at him in joy, hugging him in a death grip.

Xiang Shaolong removed his shoes, hugged her and snuggled into the blankets. He gave a long kiss before asking quietly, "Did you tell Lady Ya about how Sister Yanran saved us?"

Zhao Qian is extremely astute and she asked in shock upon hearing his words, "Is there something wrong with her? Why would there be a problem telling her?"

Xiang Shaolong's expression changed, "That means you've already told her!"

Zhao Qian shook her head, "I didn't. But it's not because I don't trust her, but because I've promised Sister Yanran that I will never reveal this matter to anyone. That's why I only told her the story that we agreed on long ago."

Xiang Shaolong heaved a great sigh of relief.

Zhao Qian's body trembled, "Heavens! What has Lady done? To make you actually sneak in here in the middle of the night just to ask me such a question?"

Xiang Shaolong caressed her back lovingly, "Have you seen her tonight?"

Zhao Qian replied, "I heard that she has a guest so it's inconvenient for me to go over. Hai! I remember now, every time they say there's a guest, Xiao Zhao and the rest will have a very strange expression, as if they are furious but unable to say anything about it. Could that guest be Zhao

Mu?”

Xiang Shaolong has already been numbed by all of these. He will no longer get agitated over Zhao Ya and Qi Yu's secret rendezvous. He is someone who is able to take things lightly.

He had once suggested to Zhao Ya to allow Jing Jun and the rest to protect her but she rejected him determinedly. At that time he didn't think too much of it but now he knows that she did not want to let him know about her affair with Qi Yu.

Zhao Qian pleaded, “Xiang Lang! Please tell me what this is all about?”

Xiang Shaolong replied, “Did you notice anything strange about Lady these few days?”

Zhao Qian thought carefully for a moment before replying, “Now that you mention it, it really seems that Lady is different from the past. Not only is she listless, there was even once I found her crying alone but when I asked her, she just said that she was thinking of Lady Ni. Sometimes she would also throw her temper at the servants for nothing.”

She pouted and hastened him to talk, “What is this all about! This suspense is making me feel terrible!”

Xiang Shaolong sighed and said, “Think again, did she say anything special, for example words like we'll never be able to escape or something along that line.”

Zhao Qian replied, “That she did not, but she did mention once that Lu Buwei can't even protect himself now and he

can face clan extermination any time. If we follow the Wu family and throw our lots with him, it's akin to sending the sheep to the tiger's den."

Xiang Shaolong asked, "Then how did you answer her?"

Zhao Qian kissed him and said, "I said as long as I can follow you, death doesn't matter at all."

She trembled and continued, "That's right! At that time she had a very strange expression. Now that I think of it, she looks almost ashamed and regretful. After that she made an excuse and left."

By now Xiang Shaolong has totally given up on Zhao Ya.

Zhao Mu is right, he understands Zhao Ya more than him. That's why he can use make use of this fickle minded woman twice to harm him.

After heaving a sigh, he told the gist of what happened to Zhao Qian.

Zhao Qian had already guessed what has happened and was strangely calm.

Xiang Shaolong told her, "You have to pretend that nothing has happened."

Zhao Qian kissed him lovingly and said gently, "Qian'er understands, I have great confidence in this new saint here and I know you will definitely be able to bring Qian'er and the Wu family past this difficult period safely."

Before Xiang Shaolong left he asked, "Will you be able to

bear abandoning your father and follow me to an unknown fate?”

Zhao Qian nodded her head with certainty, “As long as I can leave Imperial father, Qian’er is not afraid of anything. There is something I have not told you, which is after my mother died. Qian’er’s nanny once said something bad about Zhao Mu and the words drifted to Imperial father’s ears. He immediately offered poisoned wine to nanny and before she died, she held my hands and said as she cried, if there is a chance I must go far away from the Palace, being a commoner’s daughter is far better than being a Princess.”

Xiang Shaolong was full of thoughts when he heard this.

He really cannot understand the mind of royalty, just like how he cannot understand Zhao Ya.

CHAPTER 7
Lies And Trickery
[Translated by JEAN]

AFTER Xiang Shaolong and Jing Jun returned to the Wu Residence, they each went back to their own rooms.

Before they parted, Jing Jun seemed to have something to say but he stopped himself.

Xiang Shaolong knows what he's thinking and said, "Nothing will happen during the day, just rest assured and go to school! But be careful, now in Handan, besides the Wu residence, there's no other safe place."

Jing Jun was ecstatic as he replied, "I am a born hunter. I

won't become prey so easily."

Xiang Shaolong knows that he is cunning and smart and his skill at escaping is unparalleled so he was not worried.

When he returned to Hidden Dragon Abode, all the ladies were already in dreamland.

Although Xiang Shaolong is extremely tired, but his mind and spirit was greatly affected by the string of events that has happened tonight and was not in the mood for sleep at all. He suddenly had an idea, so he sat down on the bed next to his wife and concubine and followed the meditation skills written on the '3 killer moves', sitting cross legged as he adjusted his breathing, his mind melding with his heart, his heart joined with his spirit, his spirit joined with the universe as he eliminated all thoughts and unintentionally went into a state of nothingness. Something he has never experienced before. His spirit seems to leave his body, joining and parting and when he regained his senses, it was already morning and the ladies were awake.

Xiang Shaolong ignored the ladies' surprises and he was secretly astounded. He has been meditating for more than two hours but it felt as if he was asleep and woke up in the blink of an eye. He was sitting cross-legged but he did not feel any numbness in his limbs at all from lack of blood circulation.

When he was training in the special task force, he has learnt Qigong as well, using different methods but he's never had such a refreshing feeling before and for a moment he's not

really concerned about Lady Ya's matter.

During breakfast, Chunying and the maids served him especially meticulously with bright and sweet smiles and although it's the cold winter, he can still feel the allure of spring and his mood turned for the better, filled with the strong desire to fight.

After kissing the ladies, he hurriedly went to look for Xiao Yuetan, who was still sleeping with a beauty in his arms. When he knew he was looking for him, he put on a robe and came out.

At this time Xiao Yuetan's disguise has been removed, revealing his sharp features, a far cry from what he looked like yesterday, even having an air of flirtatious charm.

After exchanging civilities, Xiang Shaolong said quietly, "The news of Master Tu coming to Zhao has already been leaked by those in your country who are against Mister Lu and the King of Zhao; and Zhao Mu has learnt of this."

Xiao Yuetan's expression changed slightly, revealing a look of surprise and uncertainty.

Xiang Shaolong continued, "But it seems that they still do not know where Master Tu is; but it's certain that they have sent men to search."

Xiao Yuetan said, "I will send someone to warn Master Tu. Shaolong, Master Tu will be very grateful to you, this news is too important."

Only now did Xiang Shaolong realize that Xiao Yuetan have

not come to Handan alone. Seeing that his tone towards him has changed, he was secretly amused as he said, “Zhao Mu is keeping the Crown Prince very heavily guarded.”

He then told him what Zhu Ji has revealed last night, even telling him about how Zhao Mu has been drugging Ying Zheng.

Xiao Yuetan’s expression really changed totally and he was quiet.

Xiang Shaolong has already felt last night that his main purpose is to bring Zhu Ji and her son back to Xianyang and is not at all enthusiastic about how they should bring the Wu family over to the Qin border. Now that he’s heard the true situation, he finally understood that for outsiders like them to save Zhu Ji and her son is impossible, even with the most expert skill of disguise.

Just like what Zhu Ji has said, unless they attack the city, or else how can they bring Ying Zheng away and even if they did, he’ll end up dying from poisoning.

Xiao Yuetan took a deep breath and said, “Where did Shaolong get these news from?”

Xiang Shaolong replied, “I have men planted around Zhao Mu and last night I finally had the chance to make contact with Lady Zhu Ji. She told me personally.”

Xiao Yuetan was impressed with Xiang Shaolong’s abilities, and after a moment’s hesitation, said, “Shaolong please forgive me for being straight, it seems that the King of Zhao

has long been suspecting that the Wu family is in secret contact with our Master Lu; And now that the news of Master Tu coming here has been leaked. Anyone can guess that the purpose is to steal away mother and son. Now you are stuck, how will you be able to proceed with the plan?"

Xiang Shaolong said confidently with a smile, "I can only answer you tomorrow. Anyway we have not come to the end of the road. Can you please pass the message to Master Tu? If he really wants to bring the Crown Prince and his mother back to Xianyang, both sides must be able to cooperate sincerely."

Xiao Yuetan knows that Xiang Shaolong has seen through their intentions and said with a slight blush, "This is but of course... of course! Heh! I will inform Master Tu."

He continued with furrowed brows, "Zhao Mu is famous for his art in using drugs, how can we solve this issue?"

Xiang Shaolong laughed, "Tomorrow I will have a satisfactory answer for you."

Xiao Yuetan saw how energized and relaxed he looked and his confidence was raised as well and said with a nod, "It seems that I'll have to make a personal trip to see Master Tu and I can only be back about three to four days even at the earliest. I hope by then Shaolong will have good news to share."

Xiang Shaolong continued talking to him in secret a little more before he left and on the way back bumped into Tao Fang who was out looking for him. He looked spirited and

Xiang Shaolong thought that the Chu spy could not even hold out for a day and has revealed the truth. However, Tao Fang only said, "Shaolong's plan is really useful, it's just one night and he's almost half collapsed and only wants to sleep. I don't think he can hold out much longer and will soon confess."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that this can also be considered good news. Such methods may be inhumane but it's a little better than torturing his body. No matter how strong a person is, under such a situation, will also become extremely weak.

Tao Fang said, "Young Master left the city early this morning to the livestock farm and won't be back for a few days."

He lowered his voice and added, "He's going to make arrangements for pulling out of Zhao, it'll be the Farmers' Festival in 10 days time and we traditionally have a 'prayer ceremony' and the King of Zhao will come personally to the farm to oversee it. At that time we will send part of the family to a secret hiding place which has been prepared long ago and after the grand event, we will send them towards Qin one by one."

Xiang Shaolong was a little relieved. With Wu Yingyuan's farsightedness and planning, anything that he thinks is secure will definitely not have any problems.

Tao Fang led him towards the Wu family mansion and said along the way, "At that time when I met Shaolong at Mulberry Village, I already knew you're no ordinary man but

I did not expect you to have such accomplishments today.”

Once he mentioned Mulberry Village, Xiang Shaolong can't help but think of Mei Canniang and he turned gloomy!

He did not expect that after coming to this ancient period, there are a lot more things that makes him worry compared to in the past.

Tao Fang knows what he was thinking and tried to console him a little, but he knows that his empty words are of no use at all so he said, “Old Master wants to see you!”

Master Wu met his Grandson-in-law alone in the secret meeting room and came straight to the point, “Find a time today and I'll hold a simple ceremony for you and Fang'er to become official husband and wife.”

Xiang Shaolong hurriedly kowtowed and offered his thanks.

He's already developed deep feelings for Wu Tingfang and was glad to have such a pretty wife.

Master Wu furrowed his brows, “I thought with all the intimacy you've had, Fang'er would get pregnant very quickly, it's so strange...”

Xiang Shaolong was secretly startled, although he has thought of this question before; he's never too bothered about it.

Master Wu did not seem too bothered too and continued, “I want to tell you something important regarding the life and death of the Wu family and even Tao Fang is not aware of

this matter. Only a few people who are from the immediate Wu family are aware.”

Xiang Shaolong looked at him quizzically.

Master Wu said with seriousness, “All the residences of Princes and Royalties will have secret tunnels used for escape and this is an open secret to all. We are no exception, we have four secret tunnels leading to the outside of our estate and the exits are all near the fortress. But for us, this is just a cover.”

Xiang Shaolong’s eyes immediately brightened and he asked unbelievably, “Is there a secret tunnel that leads to outside the city?”

Master Wu said proudly, “Exactly, this tunnel that leads to outside the east city gates took three generations about 70 old years to complete and is 3li long. Countless Wu family members have sacrificed their lives building it. A lot of effort was put into just the layout of the ventilation holes. It’s more than 10 feet deep underground and even digging a well won’t be so deep down. We made use of an underground river to build it and the entrance is at a secret cave at the back of the hill and it can only be reached via a short tunnel at the back of the house and is extremely covered.”

Only now did Xiang Shaolong understand why the Wu father and son are so confident about escaping from Handan.

Master Wu said, “That’s why as long as you have the ability to bring Zhu Ji and her son to the Wu residence, we will be

confident of escaping.”

Xiang Shaolong was greatly excited and felt his confidence soaring, it seems that the most difficult problem has suddenly been solved.

Master Wu suddenly exclaimed, “This secret tunnel is not easy to travel, it’s wet and stuffy. I’ve used it once when I was young and have never gone down since, and I had hoped that I will never have the need to use it to escape. Now that I’m old, it’ll be even more difficult for me to travel!”

Xiang Shaolong said, “I heard from Master Tao that during the Farmers’ Festival, we will take the opportunity to send a group of people away, Grandfather you...”

Master Wu interrupted, “If I were to leave as well, it’ll be strange if that muddle headed ruler King Xiaocheng does not take immediate action. Everyone can leave except me.”

Xiang Shaolong’s expression changed on hearing this.

Master Wu smiled slightly, as if he’s almost at the end of his road and said gently, “The world now belongs to youngsters like you. I am old and my days are numbered, I do not have the courage to face a new life in Qin and neither can I survive the scares and difficulties involved in escaping. That’s why I’ve already told Yingyuan that I have decided to stay here and not leave.”

Xiang Shaolong was stunned, “How can the King of Zhao let you off then?”

Master Wu chortled, "Who wants him to let me off? I won't even leave a piece of my skin for him to find. I have been prestigious all my life and even in death will I not be humiliated."

Xiang Shaolong cried out hoarsely, "Grandfather!"

For the first time he felt sincere admiration for this plump old man from the bottom of his heart.

Master Wu said suavely, "Don't behave like woman or child. I have high expectations of you. In all great matters, someone must be sacrificed. If King Xiaocheng wants to attack my Wu family fortress, he'll have to pay a terrible price. I am really happy, even at a time like this I still have a group of men who are willing to lay down their lives with me."

He paused and continued, "Once you take Zhu Ji and her son away, King Xiaocheng will attack immediately. If there's no one to block him for a few days, how are all of you going to escape?"

He added with resolve, "My mind is made up, do not say anymore."

Xiang Shaolong knows it's difficult to make him change his mind, and in fact this is what he has asked for. He asked, "How many people know about the secret tunnel? It seems that even Tingfang is not aware."

Master Wu replied, "That's why it can remain a secret. Don't worry! Those who know about this are very reliable. If you

see Wu Zhuo over the next few days, tell him to lead you to it. As long as we can get out of the city, no one will know how to survive better than generations of livestock farmers like us.”

He gave a cold snort and added, “Since he’s dishonest, I need not be loyal. Since King Xiaocheng can treat me this way, I want him to have a taste of the most bitter fruit he’s ever had after the battle of Changping. I’ll make sure there won’t be a single usable warhorse in his whole country and let him sit and watch while the state of Zhao is slowly carved apart and disintegrate.”

Looking at the gleaming hatred in Master Wu’s eyes, Xiang Shaolong suddenly understood that once a person views death as a certainty, he can be a really scary person.

Xiang Shaolong is already mentally prepared for this and riding on his beloved steed which Learned Lady Ji has given him, he went to Zhao Ya’s residence and met her at the inner hall. Looking at his beauty who is only a few feet away, Xiang Shaolong however felt that the distance between their hearts is like lakes and mountains apart.

He was more alert to his surroundings and indeed noticed that Xiao Zhao and the other maids were a lot quieter, their faces expressionless, with sadness hidden in their eyes. Zhao Ya is smiling like a flower as usual but Xiang Shaolong can see that beneath the forced smile the dilemma deep within her heart.

She looked at him in surprise and said, “Shaolong you looked

especially in high spirits today, are there new developments.”

She lowered her voice and added, “Have you caught a hold over Zhao Mu already?”

Xiang Shaolong shook his head and said, “It’s not that easy!”

Zhao Ya asked, “Then are there developments over at Zhu Ji and her son’s side?”

Xiang Shaolong pretended to look troubled and said with furrowed brows, “The places where mother and son are kept are heavily guarded. There’s no way to infiltrate it as well. Do you have a way to let me meet up with them?”

Zhao Ya lowered her head and bit her teeth and said, “Let me think about it!”

Xiang Shaolong knows that she indeed has feelings for him, or else she would not have revealed so much uncertainty and could have pretended that she’s totally not up to the task.

He said with a straight face, “I’ve been thinking last night, and decided to follow Empress Jing’s words and assassinate Zhao Mu.”

Zhao Ya was stunned, “Shaolong!”

She lifted her pretty face and looked at him with misery.

Xiang Shaolong was feeling secretly pleased and said with a low voice, “Only by killing Zhao Mu will we have a chance to kidnap Zhu Ji and her son. I now have a batch of about 500

Wu family warriors who are not afraid to die and we have the strength to fight openly with Zhao Mu. As long as I do everything nice and clean, who would dare to say I am the murderer?"

Zhao Ya looked at him, in a loss.

Of course Xiang Shaolong knows that she thought he has already fallen into Empress Jing's trap, and only felt an indescribable pleasure.

Slut, since you want me to die, then let me lie to you for some fun.

"What is the best place to make the move?"

Zhao Ya lowered her head and said quietly, "It's the Farmers' Festival 10 days later. Zhao Mu will go with Imperial Brother to the livestock farm outside the Wu family fortress for prayer ceremonies. Hai! Shaolong you must think it through again."

Xiang Shaolong can feel her inner struggle and pain and his heart softened a little as he said gently, "Don't be so unconfident in me! I will split the 500 men into two groups; one group will lay in ambush along the way to ambush your Imperial Brother and Zhao MU's carriage..."

Zhao Ya exclaimed hoarsely, "What? Even Imperial Brother..."

It is exactly Xiang Shaolong's intention to force Zhao Ya to thoroughly betray him. Only by making use of Zhao Ya will he be able to trick the King of Zhao and Zhao Mu. He need

not make a pretense of the deep hatred in his eyes as he said, "The way your Imperial Brother covered up for Zhao Mu regarding Lady Ni's matter, needless to say it's because he is the cause of all this. Such an evil fiend, why keep him in this world?"

Zhao Ya looked at him in a loss, then suddenly lowered her head as if she has come to a decision as she bit her lips and said, "Then the other group will go to the Hostage Residence and kidnap them, but how are you going to leave the city?"

Xiang Shaolong said confidently, "I will open a short tunnel that will lead us out of the city at the west of the city. The Wu family has enough manpower and equipment in this area so it's guaranteed that no one will find out. We will also prepare men and horses outside the city and will leave by over 10 different routes to escape. Along the way there will be pre-prepared hiding areas so that even if the big army comes after us, it would be difficult for them to find us. Besides, by then the city of Handan will not have a leader after your Imperial Brother and Zhao Mu's death so they will certainly be in a mess. If Empress Jing comes to power, she won't be so enthusiastic in going after us. This plan can be considered foolproof, and later on I will arrange for you and Qian'er the time and place to meet."

Zhao Ya lowered her head and did not speak, the rapid changes in her expression, which she tried to hide, are all revealed to Xiang Shaolong's eyes.

He pretended to be surprised and asked, "Ya'er! What's

wrong? Is there something wrong with my plan?"

Zhao Ya was startled and regained her composure as she shook her head and replied, "Nothing's wrong, it's just that everything's too sudden for me to accept so quickly."

Xiang Shaolong deliberately made fun of her and said, "This is being deliberate. As long as we strategize well, I guarantee that the muddle headed ruler and corrupt official will only live for the next 10 days."

Zhao Ya took a sad look at him and did not say further.

Xiang Shaolong knows that he has laid enough groundwork so he stretched lazily and stood up, "Come! Let us go and look for Qian'er and Xiao Pan!"

Zhao Ya lowered her head and said quietly, "Shaolong!"

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that something is wrong, yet he is filled with hope as he asked, "What's the matter?"

Zhao Ya was hesitant for a moment before shaking her head and said, "It's nothing, we can talk after we reach the state of Qin."

Xiang Shaolong sighed secretly, knowing that Zhao Ya has let go of the last chance she has to retain him.

Their relationship has now been terminated!

From now on, all feelings have ceased and they will have nothing to do with each other.

After he left her residence, he can feel the joy of pain.

Pain because of Zhao Ya's change of heart, joy because he has discarded this relationship baggage.

Ever since the last time Zhao Ya allowed Prince Shaoyuan to enter her bedchamber without a reason, he'd already known that she has a weak will when it comes to matters revolving men and women, and this is in her nature. Zhao Ni and her faced almost the same situation but she was not like her, flirting with men everywhere.

This is called a short pain is better than a lengthened torture. Once he thought of this, he immediately felt an indescribable sense of release.

These 10 days until the actual day, the King of Zhao will deliberately make things easy for him so that he can take his time to arrange the assassination attempt and he can use this as an excuse to confiscate all of the Wu family's extensive assets.

Without a grand excuse, the King of Zhao will never dare to touch the Wu family because it will cause other wealthy families in the country to fear for themselves and start moving to other states and the situation would be terrible. He has really put a lot of thought into this.

Now he only has to find out where the real Ying Zheng is and he will be able to proceed with his secret plan.

Maybe he can even persuade Master Wu to leave with them.

Once he thought about this, he wished that he could sprout

wings and fly into the Hostage Residence immediately and ask that alluring beauty Zhu Ji this question.

The weather was bitterly cold as the northern wind howled.

There were not many people or carriages on the streets, all those who can would rather stay home than come out and face the bitter cold.

Hoof beats were heard and a group of riders appeared ahead and as they came nearer, it turned out to be Cheng Xu and 10 over soldiers.

On seeing a friend, Xiang Shaolong went up and greeted him warmly.

Who would have expected that Cheng Xu would suddenly look stunned and he forced out a smile as he said, "Commander Xiang, I have something urgent to attend to, we'll chat if there's a chance next time."

And he hurriedly rode away.

Xiang Shaolong stood there stunned.

He can only think of the famous words 'Men's heart can turn cold and the world turn icy'.

It seems that no one in Handan welcomes him now.

Behind him he heard hoof beats again as a rider rode past him and swiftly handed him a ball of paper. He opened it and it turns out that Pu Bu is arranging to meet him and it's written on the paper the place and time.

Xiang Shaolong felt a warmth filling his heart as he returned

home after tearing up the piece of paper.

CHAPTER 8
The Secret About Ying Zheng
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG sat alone in the garden in his Hidden Dragon Abode, a manmade fountain spurting water from the stone, forming a winding stream through the rocks. By now the stream is almost turning into ice, with only a small portion of water still flowing in the middle, looking extremely intriguing.

Wu Tingfang and the rest all dared not disturb him.

Thoughts rolled in his mind as he thought of how he first met Zhao Ya on the streets on Handan, how he conquered

her in his own way. He also thought of how Zhao Mu touched her all over in the carriage, of how aroused she was with all his ministrations. That there are already premonitions that she will develop feelings for someone else, because she cannot defend herself from any man's flirtations at all.

She is just following her heart, not caring about right or wrong, or else she won't have been so intimate with Zhao Mu knowing fully well that he is causing harm to the country and the people, until he has treated her so badly before she left him. If it were Zhao Ni or Zhao Qian, they would not have gone against him under such threats.

But he still trusted her, upon seeing her pretty and wonderful side; he truly believed her honeyed words.

Of course, if he is still planning to stay on in Zhao, maybe their relationship could have continued. But now it has been proven that she cannot withstand the test of benefits and lust.

People of this era all likes to use 'trickery of the heart', the higher the position of the person, the more so.

Cheng Xu who had once gone through thick and thin with him would do a sudden turnabout now caused him much heartache.

Many in this world are those who add salt to wounds, very rare are those who come to help when one is in need.

As he became lost in his thoughts, he was unconsciously

following the Mohist meditation technique to stop his thoughts and he immediately felt better. He was suddenly jolted by the sounds of footsteps, it turned out that Tao Fang has come to look for him.

He saw the look of delight on his old friend's face, who came up to him, swept off the thin layer of snow on the huge rock next to him, sat down and said, "That lad is even lousier than imagined, he's finally confessed."

Xiang Shaolong counted the time, if they started the questioning from yesterday. They have at least bombarded him with questions for more than 30 hours, which is not something that one can easily hold up against. He asked happily, "What inside news have you found out?"

Tao Fang was a little miffed as he answered, "Actually he's only a messenger, and has no idea what is Zhao Mu's background at all. He purely reports verbally what is happening in Chu and then he'll relay Zhao Mu's words back to Chu's Prince Wen Xin, Chu Leng, who is a top official whom the King of Chu trusts."

Xiang Shaolong asked, "What is Zhao Mu's message this time?"

Tao Fang replied, "He only asked Prince Wen Xing to send someone over with gifts three months later, only this point is a little unique. The rest are all normal recent news like the one regarding Xiao Weimou's death."

Xiang Shaolong had a thought and asked, "Is he still being questioned now?"

Tao Fang replied, "Of course! I was afraid he was lying so I followed your instructions and kept forcing him to repeat the details to see if anything does not correspond."

Xiang Shaolong asked, "Has he ever been to Handan in the past?"

Tao Fang shook his head, "It's the first time he made contact with Zhao Mu. In order to avoid suspicions, I believe they send different people here every time."

Xiang Shaolong asked, "How long does it take at the fastest to travel between Chu and Zhao?"

Tao Fang said, "If it's a rushed journey on a quick horse, and because there are many checkpoints along the way, just the journey alone will take two months. That's why I suspect that this person is lying."

Xiang Shaolong is adept at spying techniques and said with a smile, "No, he is not lying. This is a secret message that will prevent others from forcing the information out. Three months may be half the time actually meant. In fact he is referring to half a year. Sending gifts over meant the opposite, I've already thought that if Zhao Mu is sent here by the state of Chu, he will never let the 'Secret Manual of Lu Gong' fall into the hands of the Zhaos. So the real meaning is he wants the Chus to send over skilled exponents in half a year's time to steal the secret manual. Zhao Mu is really loyal to the state of Chu."

Tao Fang was enlightened, "So the words all meant the opposite, it's taking gifts, not giving gifts. The Chus are really

wily, and Prince Wen Xing already knows that the 'gift' refers to so he will know once he hears the message."

Xiang Shaolong's eyes shone, "Most importantly we have to find out who he pretended to be when he came to Handan and what the ways he used to make contact are. The more details the better. I was just worrying that I won't be able to kill Zhao Mu but this trip will really prove to be exciting."

Tao Fang is beginning to understand his thinking and left excitedly.

Tao Fang had just left and Jing Jun came looking for him, looking totally dispirited.

Xiang Shaolong stood up and smiled, "It seems that the lesson is not that interesting, right?"

Jing Jun came to him and said honestly, "I was bored to death and I dared not offend my future father-in-law. And to think that I had to spend money to buy 10 catties of waxed meat for him, and I did not even get to touch Zhao Zhi's hand in the end."

Xiang Shaolong asked, "You did not get to see her?"

Jing Jun sighed, "What's the use of seeing her? There are so many students. Do you think I can really walk up and start touching her? I think most of the people go there for lessons because of her."

Xiang Shaolong chortled, "Is she having lessons as well?"

Jing Jun shook his head, "Initially she was sitting at a corner,

making me think that she is accompany me for the lesson but in a short while she ran away with a smile and totally disappeared. I couldn't find her anywhere after the lesson ended. Hai! I won't ever go again even if you force me with a sword."

Xiang Shaolong shook his head and sighed, "Such impatience, how can you win the lady's heart."

Jing Jun only shook his head.

Xiang Shaolong said, "Come with me outside for a walk."

The two of them changed into commoner's clothes and went up the carriage and out of the stockade before slipping off the carriage at the corner. Jing Jun followed him from afar to see if there's anyone following him.

An hour later, Xiang Shaolong met Pu Bu at a dense forest south of the city.

Pu Bu said excitedly, "Things are going a lot smoother than imagined. Zhao Mu's number one man Zheng Yue recruited all of us. Not that I am boasting, but us warriors, when Prince Pingyuan was still alive, were quite famous and respected in Handan."

Xiang Shaolong asked, "Is there any news?"

Pu Bu replied apologetically, "We have just settled down and have not heard anything. I think we will take at least six months to a year to fully gain their trust."

Xiang Shaolong replied, "It's all right, you will stay there for a

period of time, I will come back to look for you. After we accomplish a big mission, I will bring you back with me.”

Pu Bu replied, “We will listen to Master Xiang’s instructions.” He paused and continued, “Master Xiang! We only hope to follow you.”

Xiang Shaolong replied earnestly, “I understand. I will not let you down in your trust and expectations of me.”

After they agreed on the mode of contact, Xiang Shaolong asked, “Do you know of this person from Qi called Qi Yu?”

Pu Bu replied, “That is a good question Master Xiang. The first task given to me and Liu Cao is to be his bodyguard and bring him around for fun. Hei! This lad really has a thing with women, all these women who saw him stuck to him like bees to honey.”

Xiang Shaolong felt a pain in his heart and thought of Lady Ya and asked quietly, “Have you accompanied him to see Lady Ya?”

Pu Bu replied, “That we did not, but last night he did not ask for company and slipped out of the Envoy Lodge, maybe he went to look for her.”

Xiang Shaolong said, “Don’t tell anyone about this. All right! If there’s nothing special, try not to make contact with me. No matter what you hear regarding Zhao Mu’s plans to deal with me, do not try to let me know. You must remember that.”

Pu Bu knows that he’s smarter than the average person and

although it doesn't sound very logical, there must be something to it, so he agreed.

After they parted, Xiang Shaolong went back to the Wu Residence and surprisingly We Yingyuan, Wu Zhuo and Teng Yu were all waiting for him.

In the secret chamber, the few important members of the Wu family, Master Wu, Wu Yingyuan, Wu Zhuo, Tao Fang and Xiang Shaolong were all seated, even Teng Yi as well, which goes to show that because of his relationship with Xiang Shaolong and his outstanding performance he has already gained the trust of all in the Wu family.

This is an important meeting that will impact the life and death of the Wu family.

Wu Zhuo gave his report first, "Teng Yi and I, under Young Grand-Master-in-law's instructions, chose 500 men from the 2000 elite soldiers and followed his suggested method and kept testing them. Hei! I did not expect only 77 to pass the tests. We will start training them tomorrow, but I can guarantee that these warriors will be able to fight off a hundred men single-handedly."

Xiang Shaolong said with a smile, "You only have 10 days, make good use of the time."

Everyone was perplexed, and asked him why he's so sure there's only 10 days.

Xiang Shaolong sighed and told them everything, only hiding the matter regarding the fake Ying Zheng, because he has

made a promise to keep it a secret.

Wu Yingyuan's brows furrowed deeply as he asked, "Then how are you going to get mother and son out? Won't it be even worse if he dies of poisoning after being rescued?"

Xiang Shaolong replied confidently, "There is a twist to this matter, but just as Zhu Ji was about to reveal it, Zhao Mu came and interrupted the conversation. In any case, just leave it to me."

Everyone heaved a sigh of relief, and regained their hope.

Teng Yi listened coldly, no change of expression on his face at all, giving one the impression of a hero with deep resolution.

Tao Fang complimented, "Shaolong is indeed smarter than others, making use of Zhao Ya to trick the King of Zhao and Zhao Mu. Seems that no matter what out of the ordinary things we do for the next 10 days, they will not interfere."

Master Wu nodded his head, "If we do not have Shaolong, we will surely fail terribly this time."

He turned towards his son and said, "Is the livestock farm in Qin almost ready?"

Everyone was surprised, only now did they realize that Wu Yingyuan had gone to the state of Qin to make arrangements.

Wu Yingyuan replied, "I've chosen four places to run the farm and have already sent experienced hands to deal with

it two years ago and now it's beginning to have some semblance of a farm and just about able to contain the resources and animals that we will be moving there. Humph! I really feel like seeing with my own eyes the expression of that muddleheaded ruler King Xiaocheng's face after we leave."

Xiang Shaolong can't help but ask, "There are so many animals in the farm and along the way there will be roadblocks set up by the Zhao soldiers, how we will leave?"

Wu Yingyuan said with a smile, "We will not move even a strand of grass in this farm, what we're moving are the few farms near the Qin border. The past few years we've been using the excuse that we're going to deal against the Qins to slowly expand our farms near that area and the best animals are also sent there."

Tao Fang continued, "On the surface the Zhaos are still maintaining cordial relationships with the Wu family and the soldiers at the borders do not know the situation here at all. As long as the Qins agree, even if we move all the animals, it won't pose any difficulty at all. Besides, we're now only sending over the best animals to use as stud stock."

Wu Zhuo said, "Many of the Zhao soldiers at the border are Wu family disciples I secretly planted there whose names have been changed, so it's a lot easier to work."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly impressed. It turned out that in order to save Ying Zheng and his mother, Wu Yingyuan has started working on it a few years ago, that's why everything

can move at such a breeze now.

Teng Yi asked nonchalantly, "There won't be any animals left behind for the Zhaos?"

Master Wu replied calmly, "Of course!"

Xiang Shaolong can't bear to think of the scene where the farms will be filled with the corpses of cows and horses, but they have no choice but to do this.

He changed the topic, "The most important thing now is how many days we can defend the fortress, the longer we withstand them the better the chance of us escaping."

Teng Yi and Tao Fang were just informed about the secret tunnel so they understood his meaning.

Because the Zhaos will think that they are trapped in the stockade and will not send anyone to go after them, while Zhu Ji and her son can leave the city via the tunnel. So the longer they can hold the stockade, the further they can escape, to the extent that they may even reach Xianyang before the border guards receive any news.

Wu Zhuo replied, "You can count on me and Teng Yi for this. Within these few days I will secretly move the equipment and men needed to defend the stockade in and hide them well while Brother Teng will be in charge of teaching them the art of defending a city."

Wu Yingyuan told Tao Fang, "Master Tao better transfer those outsiders somewhere else and try to dismiss the unrelated maids and servants. As for the song courtesans,

chose the best ones and send them out of the city, but you must pretend to be secretive about all these.”

Everyone else, with the exception of Teng Yi and Xiang Shaolong, all laughed.

The former because he has seldom smiled since the horrible deaths of his wife and children while Xiang Shaolong is because he thought of Master Wu’s decision to perish together with the stockade.

He can’t help but utter, “Grandfather...”

Master Wu interrupted, “This matter can only be washed with blood, so that the descendents of the Wu family will never forget their hatred with the Zhaos. Whoever wants to deal with the Wu family will have to pay a terrible price.”

He sighed softly and a look of reminiscence shot out from his eyes as he said slowly, “Our forefathers are actually Qin royalty, but because of strife we were forced to end up in Zhao. Depending on our unyielding resolution, we set up a farm in the deserted areas and became the world’s number one livestock farm. Now my descendents are finally returning home while I can only die heroically. That life has turned out this way, what more can a man ask.”

Wu Zhuo was silent while Wu Yingyuan and Tao Fang looked miserable.

A look of respect shot out from Teng Yi’s eyes as he said emotionally, “Good man!”

Master Wu smiled and stood up with some trouble, saying

“That’s why I am going to enjoy myself to the fullest for the next few days, do not bother me if there’s nothing important.”

He chortled and under the looks of everyone present, left the room humming a tune.

Teng Yi and Xiang Shaolong walked side-by-side back to the inner hall and asked, “What do you plan to do with Qian’er?”

Xiang Shaolong knows that he dotes on this pretty princess and was worried that he will abandon her so he assured him, “I will bring her along no matter what.”

Teng Yi was assured and turned around to look for Wu Zhuo.

That evening, Master Wu held a secret wedding ceremony for Xiang Shaolong and Wu Tingfang and at the same time accepted Ting Fangshi as his mistress, so that both now have a formal status.

That night Xiang Shaolong infiltrated the Hostage Residence with Jing Jun again.

Xiang Shaolong was familiar with the place and avoided the guards on patrol, coming to Zhu Ji’s bedchamber. The two of them hid on the bed and talked secretly.

Zhu Ji’s pretty face is on the same pillow as him, her body pressed tightly against him. Because she is lying on her side, sounds of her alluring breathing drifted into his ears following her breaths and that sort of pull is something no man can resist.

Luckily Xiang Shaolong's eyes were staring straight ahead at the top of the curtained bed or else once he sees her eyes, he will definitely not be able to control himself and do something that he should not have.

In this era where men hold power, women all know how to use their natural charms to control men. Zhu Ji is exactly one of the best in this area. Or else King Zhuangxiang won't be pining away for her and intelligent men like the bisexual Zhao Mu and Guo Kai won't be enamored with her at the same time.

Zhu Ji did not talk about business first and instead asked, "You have not fallen for that slut Zhao Ya?"

Xiang Shaolong thought to himself that women are women after all. Time is precious yet Zhu Ji has the inclination to talk about such gossip, so he can only accede to her and asked, "Are you familiar with her?"

Zhu Ji answered unhappily, "Zhao Mu used to bring her to my place in the past. Do you consider that familiar?"

Xiang Shaolong remembered that Zhao Ya once hinted that she has something going on with that fake Ying Zheng, so it seems that it's under Zhao Mu's instructions that she was doing such ridiculous things. He felt a wave of nausea and at the same time felt as if he has been released, because he no longer need to be responsible for Zhao Ya relationship-wise.

Zhu Ji suddenly laughed lightly and said smugly, "Zhao Mu may be wily, but he is definitely not our match. You should know how to make good use of this slut!"

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought her formidable. She was able to see through his plans immediately. He took a deep breath and said, "If the plan succeeds, it'll really be all thanks to her help."

He can't help but ask, "Lady! Where exactly is your son?"

Zhu Ji replied, "First tell me your plan, I can only tell you after I decide if it's viable."

After going through so many experiences, Xiang Shaolong has learnt not to reveal everything. He told her the gist of the plan but omitted the most important part about the secret tunnel in the Wu family and changed the escape route to be from the west of the city.

Zhu Ji is already very satisfied and kissed his cheek gently, her slender hand caressing his broad chest and asked flirtatiously, "Your waist is so hard, what is tied around there?"

Xiang Shaolong replied, "It's equipment that can make me fly over walls and needles that can kill silently."

Zhu Ji's expression changed, "Does Zhao Ya knows you have such abilities?"

Xiang Shaolong thought carefully and shook his head, "Although she has seen them before, I've never explained how they are used. Besides it seems that she is still hoping that I can escape alone and should not have told Zhao Mu about it."

Zhu Ji heaved a sigh of relief and whispered in his ear, "We

cannot just depend on luck. Can you bring me some strong drugs tomorrow? If need be, I want to think of a way to slip out myself.”

Xiang Shaolong is beginning to think that this woman is not simple at all and asked with a furrowed brow, “Even if we can drug the maids who are guarding you, we won’t be able to pass the guards. You must not believe Guo Kai. He’s just lying to get your body.”

Zhu Ji guffawed, “Only a fool would believe him. The person I want to drug is him. This is the only route to escape after I pondered on this problem day and night over the last 10 years. I want to drug him because his build and weight is about the same as me. I only need to prop my shoes higher and tie something like what you have in my clothes.”

She continued with a sigh, “Hai! If I don’t find something to do, I’d go crazy being locked up like this.”

She paused and continued in a sharp voice that sounded exactly like Guo Kai, “That’s why I imitated his way of talking and actions everyday. If not for the fact that I know I won’t be able to go far, or else I would have slipped away long ago.”

Xiang Shaolong was bowled over and complimented her sincerely, “You did a really great imitation.”

Footsteps were heard from outside the door and Xiang Shaolong hurriedly hid in the secret compartment.

The maids opened the door and came into the room, lifting

up the curtains on the bed and only left after seeing Zhu Ji who was pretending to be asleep.

Xiang Shaolong squeezed out.

Zhu Ji leaned over again and hugged him, saying, "There's a man under Buwei who is adept in the skill of disguise..."

Xiang Shaolong interrupted her, "You're referring to Xiao Yuetan, I just met him!"

Zhu Ji exclaimed happily, "Only now do I trust you wholeheartedly. All right! I'll tell you, although I do not know the skill of disguise, but I had learnt some tricks from him in the past out of interest. When I am feeling bored everyday I will try to think of a way to disguise myself as Guo Kai. I'm confident that unless I meet someone familiar, or else no one will be able to tell."

Xiang Shaolong sighed secretly, from this one can tell how much Zhu Ji learns to leave this cage, and he can also see her fierce determination during such dire situation.

Zhu Ji said, "Most importantly you must bring me the drugs. Man is strange, regardless of committing good or bad deeds, once things get started it'll be difficult to control, so sooner or later Zhao Ya will betray you totally. With Zhao Mu's cautious and suspicious nature, he will certainly increase the number of people guarding this place."

Xiang Shaolong agreed, "Now that you've said this, I too feel a bad omen. If Zhao Mu finds out that I have the ability to move about over high places, he will certainly pinpoint on

this area and deal with it.”

He then sat up.

Zhu Ji asked in alarm, “What are you doing?”

Xiang Shaolong did not reply her but moved to the side of the window and looked out, and it happened that a team of patrol just walked past. After they left, he made a signal to Jing Jun who was outside and in a short while, that lad slipped in swiftly through the window like a civet cat.

After Xiang Shaolong instructed him to return to the Wu family to take the drugs and saw him leaving safely, he went back to the bed.

Zhu Ji stared at him with her large eyes and said, “So you actually have someone who is so highly skilled helping you. No wonder Zhao Mu is so wary of you.”

Xiang Shaolong replied, “Lady, you better tell me quickly the matter regarding the Crown Prince!”

Zhu Ji said languidly, “Why the anxiety? You still have to wait for him to take the thing here before you leave. You don’t even know how torturous it is for me to keep everything to myself and it’s not easy for me to find someone like you to talk to.”

Xiang Shaolong felt both anger and humor over this and cajoled her, “Take it that I beg of you?”

Zhu Ji was ecstatic and she used her wiles and asked gently, “Shaolong! Will you kiss me?”

Xiang Shaolong had no choice but to turn his head around only to see her enigmatic and flirtatious eyes staring at him unwaveringly.

Their eyes locked for a moment and Zhu Ji took the initiative to kiss his lips, her slender body lightly moving against his.

Waves of giddiness swept over his body and Xiang Shaolong's lust was immediately aroused uncontrollably.

Zhu Ji's fragrant lips moved apart a little and she said with a light laugh, "And I thought you're a weirdo who will not be moved, so it turns out that you're no different from other men."

Xiang Shaolong felt irritation and because of this his attention was diverted and he suppressed his lust while exclaiming angrily, "Lady!"

Zhu Ji extended two fingers and pressed on his mouth, and as if cajoling a kid, said, "Don't be angry, I sincerely want to be close to you!"

Just when Xiang Shaolong could do nothing about her, Zhu Ji said with a serious tone, "At that time in order to avoid being seen, Buwei and my husband did not bring me with them. I had just given birth to a son then and he was not even a month old. After they left, I knew the situation is not right and the Zhaos may very well kill Zheng'er to appease their anger so that night I ordered my servant to go find another baby to take Zheng'er's place."

Xiang Shaolong was enlightened, "So that's how the fake

Ying Zheng came about.”

Zhu Ji said with worry, “Things done in a hurry will certainly have loopholes. We can’t find a baby around the same age at such short notice so we could only pay a large sum of money to buy a three year old kid to replace him. Luckily at that time no one thought highly of my husband and they don’t even know if he has children. That night when Zhao Mu found out that Lu Buwei and my husband had left, he sentenced all the maids and servants to death in fury, leaving only me and my fake son but his suspicions were not aroused at all.”

Only now did Xiang Shaolong understand, no wonder Ying Zheng’s age is different from the history books, so the real situation is so twisted.

The battle of Changping happened during 260BC, and he has been here for a few years and now it is 249BC, a difference of 11 years.

If Emperor Qin was born in Zhao after the defeat of Changping, and with the difficulty in news being passed during this ancient era, the news may have been delayed by one year. Therefore Ying Zheng should be born at the beginning of the year, the year after the defeat at Changping, and he ascended the throne on 246BC, which is only three years away from now. Hence he should be 13 years old by then, which proves that the history books were correct.

He’s so stupid not to have guessed that this Ying Zheng is a

fake one.

The things that he could not figure out in the past immediately became logical.

This is more reasonable, with Emperor Qin's intellect and bravery, how can he be a useless person.

Zhu Ji took out from within her clothes an exquisite jade piece with a unique design, with a phoenix carved on it. She removed it and somberly pressed it into Xiang Shaolong's hand and used his palm to cover it up, her two hands grabbing his hardened fists tightly and said gently, "The real Zheng'er has been sent to a poor family in Handan who had just lost two sons in the defeat of Changping, and it's been agreed that in future this jade piece will be used to identify each other. Zheng'er has the same jade piece hung around his neck. This has a phoenix carved on it while his has a dragon carved on it."

Xiang Shaolong asked, "Does that couple know about the Crown Prince's background?"

Zhu Ji's eyes revealed both joy and worry and she was so nervous her breathing quickened as she breathed out, "Of course we can't let them know, we just told them he's an illegitimate son borne by a girl from a rich family. At that time I didn't expect to be put under house arrest immediately and the servant who knew about the matter has been killed. Therefore I only have the opportunity to tell you this matter when you came today. Heavens! You must find him for me, or else I won't want to live either."

Xiang Shaolong can feel the remaining body warmth of Zhu Ji from the jade piece in his hands and he said confidently, "I can guarantee with my head, I will certainly find him."

Of course he is confident, or else history would not have ended up thus.

Zhu Ji whimpered, "Don't try to cajole me."

Xiang Shaolong replied, "I am someone with special abilities, my intuition will certainly not go wrong."

Zhu Ji looked at him doubtfully for a moment before moving to his ears and telling him the secret in her heart, the name and address of the person who took in her son.

Xiang Shaolong memorized it.

There was a soft sound at the window, Jing Jun has returned and he was carrying a big bag of drugs and came grinning to the curtain. He was eyeing Zhu Ji up and down and was immediately dumbfounded and forgot to speak.

Zhu Ji giggled and naturally she looked alluring.

Xiang Shaolong said with a reprimanding tone, "Xiao Jun!"

Only then did Jing Jun's senses return and he said, "This is a very strong drug, just a little can knock a person out for a day and even cold water won't rouse him. There's enough here to knock out over a hundred people."

They could hear hoof beats coming nearer from afar.

Zhu Ji and Xiang Shaolong were both stunned and know that Zhu Ji has indeed made the correct guess about Zhao Ya.

Xiang Shaolong knows that not only is Zhao Ya sinking deeper and deeper, but she has been controlled by Zhao Mu again, or else Zhao Mu won't have sent people here to increase defenses in the middle of the night. Obviously Zhao Ya has revealed to Zhao Mu in bed regarding his ability.

After he hurriedly made an agreement with Zhu Ji on the time and place for escape, the two of them left swiftly.

They've just climbed over the wall when the guards came rushing over from where the fake Ying Zheng stayed to start a new defense formation.

From this moment on, this resilient mother of Emperor Qin will have to use her own strength and intellect to escape.

CHAPTER 9
The Big Exchange
[Translated by JEAN]

EARLY the next morning, an impatient Xiang Shaolong slipped quietly into the streets and deliberately went a big round before coming to where the poor lived in at the west of the city.

Although it's where the poor lived, their lives are not that bad, only their houses were a little run down and the fallen walls not repaired! Most of the people here used to be farmers but the wars destroyed their farms and hence they have no choice but to find work in the city.

He followed the address and came at last to the South Alley which Zhu Ji told him.

At this time he can't help but feel nervous as he grabbed a passerby and asked, "Where is Zhang Li's house?"

That person saw that he looked respectable and pointed to a fenced up house at the end of the alley and said, "That is his house!"

He seemed to have some words which he found difficult to say, but he just shook his head, sighed and left.

Xiang Shaolong was not concerned at all and his mood became more relaxed. He secretly thought that this should be right, and walked over. He went to the door and shouted, "Zhang Li! Zhang Li!"

A forty over year old average looking woman stuck her head out and eyed Xiang Shaolong suspiciously for a moment before asking, "Who is looking for Zhang Li?"

Xiang Shaolong said with a smile, "You must be Madam Zhang!"

He took out the jade piece and showed it to her.

With a 'bang', Madam Zhang slammed the door close as if she has seen a ghost.

Xiang Shaolong was totally dumbfounded by her reaction and stared at the closed wooden door like a retard.

In a short while an argument between a man and a woman can be heard from inside.

Xiang Shaolong now understood. Naturally they are unwilling to return a child whom they have raised for 10 years, so he can only compensate them well with money.

He reached out and lightly knocked on the brass ring on the door.

After a pause the door opened and a man stood next to the door and said with lowered head, "Sir, please come in."

Xiang Shaolong saw that he looked honest and secretly complimented Zhu Ji's subordinate for knowing how to choose a person rightly.

He stepped into the house and saw that woman sitting at a corner weeping. A cloud of gloom hung in the house and there's no liveliness in it at all.

He did not even hear any child's voice or clothing and items.

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brow and asked, "Where's the child?"

The woman sobbed even more uncontrollably.

Zhang Li's eyes reddened as he said painfully, "Dead!"

That word sounded thunderous and made Xiang Shaolong's body tremble. He almost had an heart attack as he exclaimed in shock, "How did he die?"

Zhang Li said miserably, "Few years ago when the Yans attacked Handan, all children above the age of 13 were conscripted to defend the city, and he was killed by one of the random arrows shot by the Yans. Although we took your

money, we could not protect the child, just kill us! There's no meaning living on anyway."

Xiang Shaolong exclaimed hoarsely, "But he wasn't even 10 years old last year!" He remembered the behavior of the passerby earlier and now understood that he was feeling sorry that they have lost their son.

Zhang Li replied, "We can only blame that he's a lot bigger built than 13 year old kids. While he was outside playing one day, he was captured by passing soldiers."

Xiang Shaolong collapsed onto a chair and buried his face in his hands.

Heavens! Emperor Qin is actually dead, what should he do?

No! This is impossible, this couple must be lying. But looking at their expressions, he knows that this is the truth, especially when there's a new memorial tablet placed on a table on one side of the wall.

Zhang Li took out a jade piece and handed it to him, "This was taken from his body. He's buried in our back garden, would Sir want to take a look?"

Xiang Shaolong removed his hands and his eyes fell on the jade piece.

A ridiculous yet bold idea came uncontrollably to him.

Xiang Shaolong went to Lady Ya's residence and as expected, Zhao Ya has not returned.

There are more unfamiliar faces in the residence. He did not

see any of those whom he is familiar with like Zhao Da and the rest. Amongst the maids, with the exception of Xiao Zhao and Xiao Mei, the rest have all been transferred away.

Xiang Shaolong knows that Zhao Ya will certainly have a very good excuse for all these arrangements, but he still wants to hear her say it personally. The more she lies to him, the more he can turn his love for her into hatred.

Zhao Pan was practicing his swordplay alone in the back garden with deep concentration but once Xiang Shaolong stepped into the garden, he could detect him and he ran forward with his sword as if he has seen the only family he has in the world.

Xiang Shaolong pulled out the sword named Blood Wave which Li Mu gave him and shouted, "Lad, look out for the sword!"

Zhao Pan's eyes gleamed as he slashed forward with his sword.

Xiang Shaolong stood easily with his sword and said with a stern expression, "Do you think this is a game? Be more vicious!"

Zhao Pan roared as he executed the Mohist swordplay and slashed and stabbed at Xiang Shaolong, making a total of seven attacks.

When he reached the 7th stance, he was finally disarmed by the reverberations mainly because he is smaller sized and not as strong.

Zhao Pan looked totally dejected and extremely unhappy over his defeat but there's nothing he can do.

Xiang Shaolong picked up the long sword for him and took him to the tiny bridge in the middle of the garden. They sat on the low barrier and he said seriously, "Xiao Pan! Do you really have the perseverance to eliminate all difficulties and avenge your mother?"

Zhao Pan nodded his head with resolution, "No matter what, I must kill Zhao Mu and the King."

Xiang Shaolong asked solemnly, "Aren't you good friends with the Crown Prince?"

Zhao Pan said unhappily, "He's never been my friend. He only knows how to use his position to bully me. Ever since Mother got to know you, he's been going around telling everyone that Mother is a slut. If it's possible, I want to kill him as well."

He suddenly added, "But even if I become as formidable as Teacher, I still won't be able to kill them, or else Teacher would have killed them long ago."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly surprised at his astute observation and said with a smile, "You want revenge, I want revenge as well. Why not we split duties, I will deal with Zhao Mu while you will deal with that muddle headed ruler King Xiaocheng, how about that?"

Zhao Pan did not expect Xiang Shaolong to think so highly of him and he stared at him with huge eyes, looking morosely

at his only 'family'.

Xiang Shaolong said, "Now I am going to tell you a very important thing. If you really have the determination to avenge your mother's humiliation, then instruct me to go ahead. Otherwise you are never to reveal anything about this at all, not even to Princess Qian and Lady Ya."

Zhao Pan jumped up, kneeled on the ground and kowtowed to him three times, his eyes reddened as he said, "As long as I can avenge Mother, I am willing to do anything."

Xiang Shaolong said quietly, "Stand up!"

Zhao Pan stood up, his eyes filled with the look of extreme curiosity.

Xiang Shaolong smiled a little and continued, "I want you to become Emperor Qin who unifies the six states!"

Zhao Pan was stunned for a moment before asking quizzically, "What is Emperor Qin?"

By the time Zhao Ya came into the garden, Xiang Shaolong has just hung the jade piece on Zhao Pan's neck.

From this moment onwards, he is the heir to the Qin throne Ying Zheng.

Zhao Pan looked both shocked and overjoyed, but the look in his eyes was unwavering, filled with a determination which was never there before.

No one can understand better than him, a child who grew up in the Palace, how rare this chance can be.

And only be becoming the ruler of the strongest state in the world can he have the ability to kill the King of Zhao and avenge his Mother Lady Ni.

Not only does he hate the King of Zhao, but also every other Zhao who just stood by the side and gave him the cold shoulder.

Now the only person he trusts totally is Xiang Shaolong.

Zhao Ya came towards them with a smile and complimented, "I've never seen Xiao Pan so hardworking before."

Xiang Shaolong gave a look to Zhao Pan and the latter slipped off obediently.

Zhao Ya tried to force a smile on a face, but her countenance was pale and tired, obviously she did not have a good night.

Xiang Shaolong asked deliberately, "Ya'er, are you feeling unwell?"

Zhao Ya stammered slightly, "No! Nothing much. I was going around these few days trying to gather information for you and am so tired."

Xiang Shaolong furrowed his brows as he asked, "Why there are so many unfamiliar faces here now, where has Zhao Da and the rest gone?"

Zhao Ya seems to have prepared an answer long ago and said nonchalantly, "I had them transferred to my residence in the Palace. Without their help, it's inconvenient for me to work in the Palace."

She was afraid that he would pursue the topic so she changed the subject, "How is the plan progressing? Have you contacted Ying Zheng?"

Xiang Shaolong answered dejectedly, "It seems that other than a direct attack, there is no other way. But the Wu family's warriors can fight one against ten, so my plan will definitely succeed. Zhao Mu and King Xiaocheng can forget about living past the Farmers' Festival."

Zhao Ya lowered her pretty face, unable to hide the pain and uncertainty in her expression.

Xiang Shaolong thought secretly: let me give you another chance, and asked with concern, "Ya'er, you seem very troubled these few days. Why don't you say what is troubling you so that I can share your problems. There is nothing that cannot be solved."

Zhao Ya was stunned, "Nothing is troubling me, I'm just a little scared!"

She gathered up a smile and collected her spirits and said, "Shaolong, you better tell me the details of your plan on that day so that Third Princess and I can work with you. In that way we can avoid any last minute mishaps."

Xiang Shaolong replied with a smile, "No need to be so anxious, I will tell you the detailed arrangement in a few days, because there are some areas which we still have not settled on."

He secretly sighed and understood that Zhao Ya is really

going all the way out to betray him.

Zhao Ya suddenly asked, "Shaolong! Have you heard any rumors about me recently?"

Xiang Shaolong said lightly, "You're referring to Qi Yu's matter! How can it be? I absolutely trust my good Ya'er, and understand that you are pretending to be on their side so that the King of Zhao will not suspect us."

Zhao Ya's expression started to look unnatural, as if she's a little afraid to be alone with Xiang Shaolong, and said, "Aren't you going to see your beautiful princess?"

Xiang Shaolong stood up suavely.

Zhao Ya looked at his expression which is full of heroic air morosely, her eyes looking totally lost.

Xiang Shaolong gave a cold snort in his heart, and once he thought of the fact that later one, she will understand that he has been lying to her, and he felt an extreme satisfaction rising in his heart.

The next few days, everyone in the Wu family were getting ready. Men and supplies were constantly streaming in secretly from the tunnel into the stockade.

Xiang Shaolong personally trained those 77 members of the Wu family's special task force. The methods he used overwhelmed even Teng Yi, who is well versed in the art of warfare, and how could he have known that these are the training methods from the 21st century.

He also visited Xiao Pan frequently and taught him how to pretend to be the Ying Zheng who has lived with a poor family for 10 years and in the end, it was Xiao Pan who told him the things he has thought of instead.

Xiang Shaolong saw how smart and obedient he is and was greatly assured.

Unconsciously, it is now only three days away from the Farmers' Festival.

The situation became tense.

The most worrying thing for Xiang Shaolong now is Zhu Ji. If she cannot get out, they will really have to invade Hostage Residence by force. Without her, Xiao Pan will not be able to become Ying Zheng.

That's why they have another back up plan.

That afternoon, Xiao Yuetan who has been gone for seven days finally returned.

After entering the secret room, Xiao Yuetan's attitude is vastly different and said apologetically to Wu Yingyuan and Xiang Shaolong, "Firstly, Master Tu asked that I apologize to you first, because we had other selfish plans then and the words I used were not the whole truth. But I guarantee that from now on, we will sincerely co-operate with all of you."

To Wu Yingyuan it is like a dream and he doesn't know what has Xiang Shaolong done to make this person's attitude change so drastically.

However Xiang Shaolong was secretly startled and knows that this Tu Xian is a courageous and wise person and only then will it be possible for the plan to succeed.

Xiao Yuetan said, "Luckily Xiaolong tipped us off, or else Master Tu may have been captured by the Zhaos."

Xiang Shaolong asked, "How many of your men are here?"

Xiao Yuetan replied, "There are 30 men who came into the city with me and they are all top notch fighters."

He paused and continued, "There are 120 men with Master Tu and they are the most elite among his men."

Xiang Shaolong said, "Mister Xiao better order all those who have entered the city to come to the Wu residence."

Xiao Yuetan was stunned and asked, "Is Shaolong thinking of fighting head on with the Zhaos?"

Xiang Shaolong replied with a smile, "It may be that, but it may not be that too. Please allow me to keep you in suspense first. I will reveal the whole plan the day after. This matter is too important and I hope you will understand."

Xiao Yuetan smiled, "Shaolong is so confident, I am even more assured instead. Master Tu is now hiding in a dense forest outside the city near the hills, quietly waiting for us to send the Crown Prince and Lady out."

Wu Yingyuan laughed, "Mister is really formidable. Those few song courtesans who had served you were all pining for you. Just a word from you and we will send them to your

residence in Xianyang...”

Xiao Yuetan looked overjoyed and replied, “Everyone says that the Wu family is generous and you indeed live up to your reputation. I am definitely making you my friends.”

Xiang Shaolong took his leave and on the way bumped into Jing Jun who came to look for him. It turns out that Teng Yi had something to discuss with him.

They went to a small building near the city walls which has now become their temporary command center. Teng and Wu were studying the detailed map of the Hostage Residence.

Xiang Shaolong asked quizzically, “Where did you get such good stuff?”

Teng Yi said smugly, “I drew it. I just have to see it once and will be able to memorize and write it out.”

Xiang Shaolong was greatly surprised and did not expect Teng Yi to have such amazing memory and excellent drawing skills. After complimenting him, he continued, “I hope we don’t have to use the backup plan of invading the Hostage Residence by force. Otherwise even if we succeed, we will suffer heavy casualties as well.”

Teng and Ma nodded their heads at the same time. Obviously they have some fear and reservations about attacking the Hostage Residence.

Jing Jun said, “If we were to successfully attack the Hostage Residence, it is indeed an extremely difficult task. But if we

only need to rescue Zhu Ji, the situation will be totally different. I just have to lead those 'Elite Army'."

He then revealed his plan, which sounded totally reasonable.

The other three were astounded and all changed their impressions of him.

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that this lad is really born to be in the special task force, even better than him, and said seriously, "From now on you will be the leader of the Elite Army. It's best that you forge good relations with them so that when you work together in future, there will be no problems."

Jing Jun was ecstatic. While others were overwhelmed with duties, he had nothing to do but just be a runner for Teng Yi. Now that he's suddenly the leader of the Elite Army, naturally he is overjoyed.

With a shout, he went looking for his subordinates.

Wu Zhuo shook his head with a wry smile. Without his orders, who would listen to the commands of a young and inexperienced lad?

Teng Yi closed his eyes and recollected his thoughts for a moment, then opened his eyes and said, "I still worry about Qian'er."

Xiang Shaolong replied, "Logically speaking, they won't do anything to Qian'er before the Farmers' Festival in case our suspicions are aroused."

Teng Yi said, "In the eyes of the King of Zhao, Qian'er has committed an unforgivable crime. I'm afraid he will sentence her to death on that day and we will live to regret it."

Now that he's said that, Xiang Shaolong is worried about Xiao Pan as well. With the King of Zhao's ruthlessness, maybe he will not let a child off as well and he asked in alarm, "What should we do then?"

Zhao Mu has forced Zhao Ya to transfer all her own people away, on one hand his people can keep an eye on Lady Ya so that she will not dare to betray him, and at the same time they can control Zhao Qian's life and death.

Xiang Shaolong's concern is clouding his thinking and his brains is totally not working, unable to think of any way that can change this terrible situation. The biggest problem is that they can only wait until the last moment to save Zhao Qian.

Teng Yi said, "If the King of Zhao summoned Zhao Qian back into the Palace a day earlier, there will be nothing we can do at all."

Although it is now winter, Xiang Shaolong was sweating as he exclaimed, "I have not thought of that!"

Teng Yi said calmly, "Just leave this matter to me. Zhao Mu is still not aware that we have seen through his evil plans so he won't send a huge army to keep an eye on Lady Ya's residence. Even if he were to send people to escort Zhao Qian back to the Palace, he won't use so many manpower too. As long as we send men to keep an eye on Lady Ya's

residence round the clock, we can act according to circumstances and need not worry about any mishaps.”

Xiang Shaolong is the only one who knows what the problem is, and it is Xiao Pan. He is determined not to tell anyone about Xiao Pan impersonating Ying Zheng. In future only he, Zhao Qian, Wu Tingfang and a limited number of people will know of this, no one else will know Xiao Pan’s real identity.

Teng Yi said, “What I fear is that the King of Zhao would be so ruthless and sentence his daughter to death. This is really problematic.”

Xiang Shaolong hardened his resolve and said, “Maybe I will have to do it the hard way, I will pressurize Zhao Ya to let me bring Qian’er here. Her only way is to seek the King’s advice. If he really has the intention of killing his daughter, he won’t mind her coming to the Wu family, and can even accuse us of one more crime, kidnapping the princess. By then they will have even more reason to back them up.”

Teng Yi said, “Logically speaking you should take Zhao Ya along as well. Won’t she be suspicious?”

Xiang Shaolong also felt that this plan is not really workable and just as he was worrying over it, Lady Ya sent someone to invite him over to her residence.

Xiang Shaolong on his way hurriedly, knew fully well that it is time to give Zhao Ya all the fake cards.

CHAPTER 10
Going Along With The Mistake
[Translated by JEAN]

XIANG SHAOLONG met Zhao Ya at the quiet inner hall.

It was a sunny day, the sun who has not shown his face for many days shone gently on the silvery white world.

This time Xiang Shaolong did not even see Xiao Zhao and Xiao Mei, it seems that everyone in the whole residence has been changed with Zhao Mu's men.

Zhao Ya was dressed in yellow and she seemed to be in better spirits but it still could not hide her sad and tired face. There is a kind of heartbreaking, lonesome beauty, which

revealed the torture and dilemma in her heart.

But Xiang Shaolong has no pity for her at all. He only thought that she deserves it.

After they were seated and the maid who served tea left, Zhao Ya said quietly, "How are things progressing?"

Xiang Shaolong gave a small smile and replied, "Quite smoothly. Do you have any new information on your side, did Zhao Mu hear of anything at all?"

Zhao Ya shook her head, "Imperial Brother and Zhao Mu's attention are all placed on the war with the Yans, and has no time to bother about other matters for the moment."

She paused and continued, "Instead Empress Jing is urging you to strike quickly and wants me to tell you that Imperial Brother is very unhappy because you submitted the document together with Li Mu and it's quite possible that he will deal with you and the Wu family after the Farmers' Festival."

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought that they are trying to make him more determined to strike. Zhao Ya, you're really hardworking.

Zhao Ya saw that he was quiet and asked, "Have you made contact with Lu Buwei and the rest? If there's no one from Qin to help, how are we going to send Zhu Ji and her son back to Xianyang?"

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be troubled and said, "We've made contact long ago. They sent Tu Xian and his men over

first but they still do not trust us. They only said that if we can get Zhu Ji and her son out of the city, then we are to meet them at Magu Hill west of the city.”

How is Zhao Ya supposed to know this is all nonsense so her pretty eyes brightened and she pressed on, “There’s only two days left. Is the secret tunnel out of the city ready?”

Xiang Shaolong suddenly had a bright idea and said, “Everything is ready.”

He continued with an earnest voice, “To me, you and Qian’er are more important than Zhu Ji and her son, so I’ve decided to send you, Qian’er and Xiao Pan out of the city first before I activate the attack on your Imperial Brother and the Hostage Residence. Otherwise I’d rather cancel the whole plan.”

Zhao Ya’s delicate body shook as she lowered her head and said, “Are we really that important?”

Xiang Shaolong was secretly laughing to himself as he replied, “What joy do I have left if I lose all of you. According to past experiences, your Imperial Brother’s troops will leave the city the day after at the hour of Chen (between 7am to 9am). I will wait for you at the back door a little earlier, around the hour of Mao (between 5am to 7am). If everything is appropriate, I’ll immediately send someone to send all of you to the west of the city and after I’ve kidnapped Zhu Ji and her son, I will meet up with you and leave the city together via the secret tunnel.”

Zhao Ya asked, “Who is in charge of the ambush outside the

city?”

Xiang Shaolong replied, “Of course Wu Zhuo will be in charge. When the troops pass by the tall grassland, our men who are already in hiding in pre-dug ditches will shoot arrows when they are caught unprepared and they will be unable to react. This plan can be considered flawless.”

Zhao Ya’s lips quivered slightly and with a voice as soft as an insect buzzing, said, “All right! At that time I, Third Princess and Xiao Pan will slip out to meet up with you.”

Xiang Shaolong saw that he has reached his aim and went to look for Zhao Qian. Zhao Ya used the excuse that she’s returning to the Palace to report to Empress Jing and left the residence. However Xiang Shaolong of course knows that she is going to report the latest situation to the King of Zhao.

Naturally Zhao Qian is overjoyed at seeing him, but also worried that he won’t be able to win against the King of Zhao and Zhao Mu.

Xiang Shaolong hugged her, whispering sweet nothings to her and at the same time telling her about the plan to change Xiao Pan into Ying Zheng.

The expression on Zhao Qian’s pretty face changed, not knowing whether to feel scared or excited as breathed out, “No wonder Xiao Pan has been behaving strangely these few days, talking to himself. I was so worried that he has lost his senses because he missed his mother too much yet I dare not tell you for fear that you will be distracted.”

Xiang Shaolong said, "Besides you and Tingfang, no one else knows his real identity, so under no circumstances must you reveal the truth of this matter."

Zhao Qian replied, "I understand!"

To assure her, Xiang Shaolong told her what he said to Zhao Ya earlier and further discussed how they could help Xiao Pan disguise before he returned to the Wu family's stockade.

The next day Xiang Shaolong went back to Zhao Ya's residence to look for her and to test her.

As expected, Zhao Ya has no objections to this arrangement.

Standing from Zhao Mu's viewpoint, Xiang Shaolong and the Wu family is just toying within his palms, and there's no way they can escape from his hands. That's why he will never let go of this opportunity that seems heaven bestowed to totally eliminate Xiang Shaolong and all of the Wu family's power in one fell swoop.

Xiang Shaolong smiled and said, "Kids are more easily frightened. I'd like to take Xiao Pan away first, does Ya'er have any thoughts about this?"

Why on earth would Zhao Ya bother about an unimportant orphan? So she nodded her head in agreement.

Xiang Shaolong stood up and was about to leave.

Zhao Ya called out softly, "Shaolong!"

Xiang Shaolong turned around and Zhao Ya threw herself into his arms, her slender hands encircling his neck as she

kissed him, using all her strength to portray the pain in her heart.

Although Xiang Shaolong is not at all interested, he had to pretend to lustily savor her tiny mouth.

As their lips parted, Zhao Ya's tears flowed uncontrollably.

Xiang Shaolong pretended to be surprised and asked, "Do you have any problems?"

Zhao Ya leaned on his shoulder and wailed, only recollecting herself after a long while and said, "I'm just too happy, that's why I behaved this way."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly cursing.

Zhao Ya stepped away and wiped her tears as she said, "Go and look for Xiao Pan!"

Xiang Shaolong took Xiao Pan away openly and along the way he changed him into some torn and old clothes he prepared earlier and gave him some instructions before bringing him back to the Wu stockade.

Before that he has already told the needed people that Ying Zheng is actually another person. Those in the Wu family were very excited and the happiest is Xiao Yuetan, because this has changed the entire situation.

They have just stepped through the door when Wu Yingyuan and Xiao Yuetan rushed forward and knelt down, calling out Crown Prince.

Xiao Pan pretended to be overwhelmed and hid behind

Xiang Shaolong, and kept crying out that he wants to see his real mother.

Xiang Shaolong told them, "He's still not used to his real identity. Let me bring him to Tingfang for her to look after and we'll talk again after he's seen the Empress."

They did not suspect a thing at all and happily showed this fake prince into the inner mansion.

Time passed, and the day of the Farmers' Festival finally arrived.

Everyone in the stockade woke up before dawn.

All the ladies and children used the excuse that they are going to the farms to celebrate the Farmers' Festival to leave the city. Ting Fangshi and the four maids were one of the batch who was sent away.

Wu Tingfang threw a tantrum, insisting on staying by Xiang Shaolong's side. No one could do anything about her so they had to agree.

Inside the stockade, besides the 2000 elite soldiers under Wu Zhuo, there are also 700 odd loyal warriors and 200 odd male and female strong servants, in all about 3000 people. In addition to the high walls and the moat, they are a force not to be reckoned with.

This is also the reason the King of Zhao dare not make any rash moves. It'll be easier to deal with them if they can be lured out of the strong fortress.

After their meal, Xiang Shaolong led Teng Yi, Jing Jun, Xiao Yuetan and his 30 highly skilled men as well as Wu family's 77 elite warriors who are akin to the special task force, out of the city in the dark.

Shortly after they left the stockade, Wu Zhuo led another 50 skilled men and a horse carriage towards Lady Ya's residence.

The sun only came out slowly an hour later, after they reached the back door of Lady Ya's residence.

The back door opened immediately and Zhao Ya and Zhao Qian dashed out from inside.

Someone opened the carriage door and invited them in.

Zhao Ya followed Zhao Qian into the carriage and only saw Wu Zhuo and two other people sitting inside, and he said coldly, "Lady, hello!"

Zhao Ya tried to be calm as she asked, "Where is Shaolong?"

Wu Zhuo signaled the two men with his eyes and they immediately struck, tying Zhao Ya up sturdily and even sealed her pretty mouth.

Wu Zhuo passed the pre-prepared clothes to Zhao Qian to let her wear over her clothes and in a short while, she has turned into a man. Unless one looks closely, no one will be able to tell the difference; especially the fake moustache above her lips is so well made.

Zhao Ya's alarmed and pretty eyes looked at Wu Zhuo, and

looked at Zhao Qian who seemed not to care about her and finally realized what is happening. She felt a mixture of shame and regret.

Wu Zhuo looked at her with distaste, "You're such a stupid and cheap slut, how dare you betray our Master Xiang, you really do not know your own ability." And he spat at her.

By now the carriage has turned into a small lane, and Wu Zhuo and Zhao Qian dismounted before the carriage continued on its way.

Zhao Ya's tears finally flowed uncontrollably.

Outside the carriage window, snow suddenly fell.

Xiang Shaolong, Teng Yi, Xiao Yuetan etc were hiding in the dense woods opposite the Hostage Residence, concentrating on the happenings at the main door. Everything seems to look normal; there aren't even guards at the door, as if they are not prepared at all.

Xiao Yuetan asked doubtfully, "Would Lady be able to slip out so easily?"

Xiang Shaolong looked at the falling snow and secretly thought that it is indeed written in history books that Zhu Ji and her son arrived at Xianyang safely, so this seemingly impossible matter should happen smoothly. He said with confidence, "Definitely!"

Before he could finish his words, the door to the Hostage Residence opened. First 10 Zhao soldiers on horses came out, followed by an elaborate horse carriage, and another 20

riders followed behind it as they came out to the streets pompously, turned left and rode towards the west.

Everyone was ecstatic and hurried to act.

Jing Jun who was hiding in ambush at that side received the flag signal and immediately gave orders to prepare to attack. 30 elite members swiftly used their pre-prepared ropes and climbed up the trees lining on each side of the road, their bows and arrows aimed at the fast approaching target.

Just as the carriage was about to reach the trees where the men were hiding in ambush, loud hoof beats were suddenly heard from behind and a Zhao soldier on horseback came rushing up, signaling them to stop their advancement.

The leader of the carriage team was startled and ordered his men to stop moving.

Suddenly the sounds of arrows flying were heard and 31 men, including the last Zhao soldier were all killed, with one arrow in each of them as they fell down their horses.

The elite soldiers all jumped down and landed squarely on the horses backs, controlling the alarmed and neighing war horses.

Jing Jun landed lightly on the roof of the carriage and just as he was about to lean upside down and poke his head in to claim his reward from the 'fake Guo Kai' who is in fact Zhu Ji, a man with a sword banged the door open and dashed out.

Everyone was stunned.

This person was dressed in finery and looked to be about 25 to 26 years of age, his height comparable to Xiang Shaolong, his looks extremely handsome and suave. His eyes were so alluring it captivates the soul and he is more than qualified to be the dream man of any woman.

He's also very alert, on seeing the bodies of the Zhao soldiers on the ground and surrounded by enemies, he roared and wanted to dash into the woods at the side. However, his neck felt tight and he was grabbed around the neck by Jung Jun who was on top of the carriage and the sword in his hand fell to the ground.

2 elite soldiers dashed up and immediately tossed him flat on the ground and at the same time punched and kicked him. He was in such pain that he curled up on the ground.

Xiang Shaolong, Xiao Yuetan and the rest arrived and on seeing such a scene, their expressions changed.

The horse carriage was empty.

Xiang Shaolong stepped on that man's stomach and shouted, "Who are you?"

Jing Jun grabbed his hair and pulled his face up to reveal a pretty toy boy.

That man was so frightened he turned pale as he stammered and pleaded, "Sirs spare my life. I am an envoy from the state of Qi and have no enmity with you."

Xiang Shaolong and Jing Jun looked at each other. They did not expect this Qi Yu to be so useless, cowardly and afraid of

death.

Xiao Yuetan exclaimed agitatedly, "What shall we do? Obviously Guo Kai did not go to Lady's room last night."

Everyone was immediately aware that this man in front of them must have tried to go and take advantage of Zhu Ji and only left now after breakfast. Even though Zhu Ji has the ability to entice all men on earth, there is no way she can use her ability because since she wasn't able to get Guo Kai to her bed, of course she has no chance to drug him.

Xiang Shaolong pulled out Blood Wave, pointing it at Qi Yu's eyes and roared, "You want your left eye or right eye?"

Qi Yu stammered, "Spare me! I promise to do anything you ask."

Xiang Shaolong regained his calm and composure and said with a smile, "I only want you to go back to Hostage Residence."

The team rode back to the Hostage Residence in spite of the heavy snow.

Xiang Shaolong and Xiao Yuetan sat in the carriage, holding the shaking Qi Yu as hostage. Looking at this Casanova, they don't know whether to be angry or to laugh.

The door opened and someone called out, "Why has Master Qi returned?"

Under Xiang and Xiao's threatening gestures, Qi Yu called out, "I've left an important document behind and need to

take it back from Lady's place."

That guard said, "Master Guo has ordered that no one is allowed into Hostage Residence."

Qi Yu followed what Xiang Shaolong whispered in his ear and said, "This document has something to do with your country's King and is extremely important. I'll be responsible for anything that happens, let me in quickly!"

That guard had no choice but to let him in because of his special status and also because he just came out of the residence earlier.

The accompanying Zhao soldiers are of course Jing Jun and his men in disguise. Firstly, it was snowing heavily and also because these soldiers sent to protect Qi Yu are from a different camp to those guarding the residence so they do not know one another and for the moment no one could detect anything wrong.

Everyone heaved a sigh of relief as the carriage hurriedly arrived at the empty space next to Zhu Ji's residence.

Jing Jun is in charge of staying outside the residence and on seeing the various defense setup in the garden and the ditches for archers. He can't help but heave a sigh of relief, feeling glad that they need not force their way in.

Xiang Shaolong and Xiao Yuetan escorted Qi Yu on his left and right, with four more men following them and went into the building. The four Zhao soldiers standing guard at the steps recognized Qi Yu and although they saw that he looked

pale, they thought it's because he exerted too much 'energy' last night and so did not suspect anything amiss.

Two of the guards followed them into the building.

Two pretty maids were cleaning up the hall and they both smiled and came towards Qi Yu to welcome him once they saw him.

Xiang Shaolong gave a secret signal and the four elite soldiers struck at the same time, using the techniques they learnt from Xiang Shaolong to knock the two maids and two guards out. They immediately tied them up tightly with ropes, stuffed their mouths and dragged them to a corner.

Xiang Shaolong asked Qi Yu frostily, "How many others are there in the house?"

Qi Yu replied obediently, "There are another five maids and two of them are accompanying Zhu Ji."

To stay alive, he is indeed revealing everything that he knows.

Just as the four elite soldiers were about to go search, the main door suddenly opened and Guo Kai dashed in and asked Qi Yu unhappily, "Why have Master Envoy come back again, didn't you have enough fun last night?"

His tone was filled with jealousy.

Xiang Shaolong knows that he must have heard the news from the fake Ying Zheng and this came over hurriedly to make sarcastic remarks at Qi Yu who has taken his Zhu Ji and

felt like laughing.

Qi Yu could only look at him and smile bitterly.

Only now did Guo Kai have the time to look at the people accompanying Qi Yu and when his gaze fell on the coldly sniggering Xiang Shaolong. His expression changed immediately and before he has the chance to shout, a sword was already at his throat.

Xiang Shaolong asked with a smile, "How have Master Guo been!"

Guo Kai stammered, "You will never be able to escape!"

Xiang Shaolong replied nonchalantly, "Who is escaping?"

He deliberately emphasized on the word 'escaping'.

Xiao Yuetan ordered, "Escort them them."

Two soldiers went off first to look for the other maids whom they have not captured while Xiang Shaolong and the rest took the two of them and went up the second floor to Zhu Ji's tightly closed room.

Guo Kai was threatened and had no choice but to order the strong maids who were inside guarding Zhu Ji to open the door.

The door opened slightly and Xiang Shaolong forced his way in and knocked the two maids unconscious.

Zhu Ji was sitting in a daze in front of the copper mirror, looking unhappy when she suddenly saw a Zhao soldier dash in and hit the maids. Just as she was totally scared stiff, Xiao

Yuetan has already dashed forward and knelt on the ground, saying quietly, "Your subordinate Xiao Yuetan was late in saving you. Lady must have suffered!"

As she spoke, he was so overcome by emotions that he almost wept.

Xiang Shaolong thought that this person really does know how to act, no wonder Lu Buwei thought so highly of him. He reminded them, "Lady, disguise yourself as Guo Kai quickly."

Only now did Zhu Ji recognize that it's Xiang Shaolong and she jumped up with joy. She first went to Guo Kai and Qi Yu and gave each of them a slap on the cheek.

Xiang Shaolong secretly thought her formidable and at the same time ordered "Bring the two of them out first, remove Master Guo's clothes and then tie him up."

Two members of their group obeyed the orders and pushed them out of the room.

With Xiao Yuetan's expert help, when Zhu Ji put on Guo Kai's signature long beard and wore his official robes and hat, even Xiang Shaolong could not see the difference.

Zhu Ji remembered something and asked, "Where is Zheng'er?"

Her voice obviously shaking.

Xiang Shaolong said with a smile, "Fortunately he's still alive!"

Zhu Ji exclaimed in joy and almost wanted to rush forward to hug and kiss Xiang Shaolong. She turned to Xiao Yuetan and asked, "Does... does he look like his Majesty?"

Xiao Yuetan coughed drily and stole a look at Xiang Shaolong before replying with embarrassment, "Extremely like him, but he looks as good as Lady too."

With such a question and answer, Xiang Shaolong knows immediately that even Zhu Ji herself is not sure who this son of hers belong to. Of course she would never imagine that the son she is about to see is not her own flesh and blood at all. Such a messy affair, who knows how it can be explained.

They dare not stay any longer and walked out of the room.

Guo Kai was tied tightly and when he saw 'himself' walking out from the room, he was so shocked his eyes almost fell out.

Zhu Ji imitated his voice and said, "Kill him for me!"

Guo Kai and Qi Yu's faces immediately paled.

Xiang Shaolong has no wish to kill a defenseless person, so he said laughingly, "Keeping him alive will be even more torturous than killing him."

Zhu Ji rolled her eyes at him and said, "You are a very good man!" and walked downstairs first with a smile.

Xiang Shaolong and the rest have now turned into followers, and escorting Qi Yu, ran after her.

Zhu Ji, disguised as Guo Kai, walked out the main door first

and imitating Guo Kai's voice and tone, reprimanded Qi Yu who was following behind, "If you're not an honored guest from the state of Qi, I would have punished you severely."

Qi Yu lowered his head, looking as if he has made a great mistake.

As 'Guo Kai' continued his reprimands, he went up the horse carriage together with Qi Yu and of course Xiang Shaolong and Xiao Yuetan followed them in.

The horse carriage drove out and arriving at the main gate, the leader of the guards guarding the gate walked over and said, "Master Envoy..."

Zhu Ji interrupted, "I am going out with Master Envoy for a while. All of you guard the doors closely."

The leader was stunned, "Sir! This place needs you here."

Zhu Ji said with her most officious air, "I know what to do. You, Chen Gui, are in no position to tell me what to do, open the door quickly!"

The wonderful part is that she even knows the other person's name. That leader has no choice but to order the doors to be opened.

The team left Hostage Residence with no trouble at all.

CHAPTER 11
Army Arrives At Stockade
[Translated by JEAN]

THE CARRIAGE stopped.

Zhao Ya was just blaming herself and feeling ashamed and regretful when Wu Zhuo went up the horse carriage and released the ropes that bind her.

After she has flexed her limbs, Wu Zhuo ordered her off the carriage.

Zhao Ya recognized this to be a dense forest not far away from the Wu family stockade and just as she was feeling alarmed, a few people appeared from behind the trees and

the leader is none other than the person she betrayed, Xiang Shaolong.

Zhao Ya's legs weakened and she collapsed onto the ground, hot tears streaming from her eyes, unable to talk at all.

Xiang Shaolong pushed the person next to him and that person fell next to Zhao Ya as he said icily, "I'll let you adulterous pair become a pair of lovebirds with the same fate."

Qi Yu stammered, "Don't kill me. Sir, you promised me."

His cowardice made even Zhao Ya feel despise and loath.

This good looking man seems like an upright and arrogant man usually but it turns out that he is so timid and useless. Especially when he is next to Xiang Shaolong, compared to the latter's heroic air who is not concerned about his own life or death, one can immediately see the difference is as vast as heaven and earth.

At this time even Zhao Ya feels as if she has been blinded by ghosts to have actually fallen for a person like him.

Zhao Ya forced herself to get up and cried piteously, "Shaolong! I've let you down and I'm not good enough for you, kill me!"

Xiang Shaolong looked heavenward and laughed long and hard, saying coldly and unfeelingly, "I do not want a slut like you to sully my precious sword. Remember? I once said that anyone who tries to kill me will have to pay a terrible price. Now I will prove it to you, tell your Imperial Brother and

Zhao Mu to come!”

Zhao Ya was stunned, “Weren’t you trying to escape?”

Xiang Shaolong smiled mysteriously, “Of course! I will leave immediately. Now that I have Zhu Ji, I can account to the King of Qin.”

Sounds of hoof beats could be heard from afar.

Xiang Shaolong revealed a look of surprise and exclaimed, “Oh no! We’ve been found out.”

Wu Zhuo exclaimed frightfully as well, “We have no time to leave, return to the stockade first.”

Zhao Ya looked with tears in her eyes as this man who has once let her tasted real love leave. The pain and regret she felt is like a poisoned snake biting her heart.

Qi Yu who was next to her exclaimed happily, “Look! The Zhao soldiers are here, we are saved!”

Darkness appeared before Zhao Ya’s eyes as she fainted away.

Mission accomplished, Xiang Shaolong and the rest returned triumphantly to the cheers of the Wu family warriors, passed the drawbridge and rushed straight into the stockade.

Master Wu welcomed them personally at the square while Xiao Pan hid behind Wu Tingfang who was dressed in warrior clothes and Zhao Qian, looking as his ‘mother’ Zhu Ji who has changed back into herself entered the stockade and alighted from the carriage.

At this point in time, in Zhu Ji's eyes, she can only see Xiao Pan. The expression on her face is a touching, ecstatic joy that cannot be hidden as she ran towards Xiao Pan.

Xiao Pan ran out crying as well and threw himself into her arms as mother and son hugged each other and sobbed uncontrollably.

After being separated for 10 years, her flesh and blood whom she has been pining for everyday is not back in her arms. How can she not cry?

And because of this 'mother' he thought of his real mother so he sobbed even harder than Zhu Ji and even more honest, the anger that has been simmering inside him flooding out in waves.

Master Wu came to the mother and son and said with much feeling, "Lady, this should be a time of joy."

The horns were sounded. It means that the Zhao soldiers have already arrived at the stockade.

Zhu Ji lifted her pretty face, her pretty eyes now red and swollen from the crying as she looked at Master Wu and said, "It's all thanks to Master Wu's chivalry that us mother and son will have this day. I won't say any words of gratitude, but as long as us mother and son still have some say in Qin, we will protect the Wu family and ensure you'll have riches and your descendants will be safe."

She has already learnt that Master Wu is planning to perish with the stockade heroically so that they can escape, so she

spoke sincerely from the bottom of her heart, which she seldom does.

With tears shimmering in his eyes, Master Wu laughed loudly, "With Lady's words, I will be able to smile in the underworld."

Xiao Yuetan was worried that any delay might bring more problems so he hurried her, "Lady! We have to leave immediately."

Wu Yingyuan and Jing Jun's elite troops, together with Xiao Yuetan and 30 of his skilled fighters escorted the mother and son, as well as Zhao Qian who was saying her goodbyes sadly to Xiang Shaolong, towards the back of the house. Naturally they are going out of the city via the underground tunnel to meet up with Tu Xian's group.

Xiang Shaolong, Wu Zhuo, Teng Yi and the rest stayed behind because without them, how can they fend off the Zhao army who is more than 10 times bigger than them.

The Zhao army did not invade the stockade immediately but set up defenses outside. The other soldiers in and around Handan kept coming as backup, bringing with them various tools used for invading a fortress. It was only the third day did they complete the whole setup to surround them.

This is exactly what Xiang Shaolong hoped for, which is to lure and keep the Zhao army here so that Zhu Ji and the rest can escape safely to Xianyang.

The most wonderful part of this whole plan is that the Zhaos

think that Ying Zheng is still in their hands so they're not too bothered that others have escaped. They'll be satisfied as long as they can bring the stockade down and kill everyone in the Wu family.

Xiang Shaolong appeared periodically at the walls of the stockade and even made special arrangements for Master Wu and Wu Tingfang to appear there as well so that the Zhaos will not suspect that they have other plans.

On the third night, the warriors who were in charge of keeping an eye on the four underground tunnels that leads only to the woods outside the stockade found Zhao soldiers making their way in and hurriedly threw in the burning firewood. With the help of huge fans, they literally burnt a few hundred of the arriving Zhao soldiers alive before sealing the underground passages with rocks.

Naturally the King of Zhao was fuming over this and sent someone over to curse at them beneath the stockade walls early in the morning.

Xiang Shaolong found this very amusing, this is the first time he saw such meaningless 'cursing'.

Teng Yi did not said a word but took out his specially made strongbow and made the Zhaos dumbfounded by shooting the extremely loud cursing expert off his horse. The distance was more than 800 steps away and the range several feet further than an ordinary bow.

The cheers from the Wu family warriors were deafening.

Whereas the Zhao soldiers were speechless.

Suddenly a person rode over but this time he has learnt his lesson, pulling his horse to a stop when he was a thousand steps away and shouted loudly, "Xiang Shaolong, his Majesty wants to speak with you."

Xiang Shaolong was secretly laughing to himself and thinking that he is not so stupid as to shout and strain his throat just to converse.

Wu Zhuo who was next to him summoned a man over and said with a smile, "It's good to humiliate him in public!"

Xiang Shaolong understood his meaning and said, "Tell him to go ahead and fart!"

He can't help but laugh after he said this.

Wu Zhuo and Teng Yi couldn't restrain their smiles and to Teng Yi, this is a rare expression.

That person was stunned for a moment before shouting down, "Go ahead and fart!"

His voice reverberated along the walls.

Those on the Wu family side all chortled and the atmosphere was filled with happiness while the Zhaos were fuming on their side.

The conversation could not proceed and amidst the booming sounds of the war drums, the Zhao army prepared to attack the stockade.

The huge Zhao army surrounding the city, without including

the reinforcements, totaled about 30,000 odd men consisting mainly of foot soldiers. This is all the strength the Zhaos could gather within such short notice and the thoroughly surrounded the stockade.

In the chapter 'Masculine & Feminine Cities' in Sun Tzu's Art of War, cities are mainly grouped into two types: cities on higher ground or backed against mountains with a good source of water are called 'Masculine Cities' and is extremely difficult to besiege. Cities on lower ground, or are between two mountains, or if backed against a valley, and where plants do not flourish are called 'Feminine Cities' and as long as one has enough strength, they can be easily overtaken.

The Wu family stockade is the typical 'Masculine City'. When the city was initially built the King of Zhao was hoping that it would become another important post, which they can defend the city from, but how could he have expected that now it's a place of betrayal against himself now.

Therefore the Zhaos did not want to attack the stockade rashly so that they will not suffer heavy losses. Initially they thought there would be problems regarding rations and the people in the stockade but now that they saw that the morale in there is so high, they know they've made a big mistake.

The generals had initially wanted to have a drawn out siege of the stockade but they did not expect that Xiang Shaolong's sentence would infuriate the King of Zhao so much that he could not control his temper and ordered a

head on attack.

The Wu family is enormously wealthy and the way the stockade was built was according to the strictest standard at that time and is extremely solid. The stockade walls are thick and high, enough to fend off the enemy's direct attacks, climbs and knocks. The moat is deep and wide and at the top of the walls there are the elite Wu family warriors. Hence, even though the Zhao army is more than 10 times bigger, they are still not confident of breaking into the stockade. Their only advantage is that they have unlimited reinforcements that is enough to let them have a long battle of stamina.

Although Xiang Shaolong and the rest have the convenience of the underground tunnel, they have already transported all their store of rations inside, while the farmers outside the stockade have to escape to Qin, so they've now become a lone army. However their aim is just to defend for a short period of time, so they are feeling lighthearted, and to them this is just a game with the Zhaos of defending the city.

Xiang Shaolong looked at the approaching Zhao army with their shields up and asked with furrowed brow, "Why don't they cut off the water source to the moat, instead they're going through the trouble of crossing the moat?"

Wu Zhuo said with a laugh, "This is a live river, we need not irrigate water in. There is a spring supplying water beneath the moat and they can't stop the water supply even if they want to."

Xiang Shaolong was enlightened; his knowledge grew with each experience.

Teng Yi said calmly, "The way to break this is to divert the flow of the water, but that will take at least 10 odd days to complete. I'm guessing that they are swiftly trying to build mobile bridges at the back end to put across the moats to make it more convenient for attacking the stockade.

Xiang Shaolong asked quizzically, "Then those people below are just putting up a show?"

Teng Yi explained, "A besieging army fears boredom the most, so there is a need to make them move. They can take it as a form of stretching or exercise, as that's the only way to maintain morale."

Xiang Shaolong nodded to indicate his understanding. In a war, a person's psychology cannot be neglected, the same as in the past or in the future.

The Zhao army below gave a shout as they charged forward until they reached the bank of the moat and squatted down, hiding behind their shields. Thousands of archers charged behind them and after hiding behind those shields, raised their bows to shoot and for a moment arrows rained down on the walls.

Teng Yi gave an order and the Wu family warriors all hid behind the ditches and did not return the strike.

Teng Yi shouted in a voice even louder than that cursing officer, "Prepare sand! Fire extinguishing teams get ready."

Before he could finish his words, another 2000 odd soldiers from the enemy side dashed out and shot at the city walls with burning arrows.

The attack on the stockade finally started.

Both sides used burning rocks to attack each other, the outer walls and top of the stockade bore the damage made by the impact and the fire but it's just superficial damage, the basic structure is not affected at all. The Wu family warriors are on higher grounds and have sufficient rocks so their defense was tight with minimal casualties whereas the Zhaos had more than a thousand dead or injured within a day, a heavy cost to pay.

Until now, the King of Zhao and Zhao Mu still cannot understand why their opponent is so well prepared. They have been secretly keeping an eye on the movements in the Wu family and only saw people and rations being moved out of the stockade but nothing has been transported in.

They could not imagine the existence of the underground tunnel, so they can't be considered stupid. Firstly, it's almost impossible to build such a long underground tunnel. Also, if there is a underground tunnel, Xiang Shaolong and the rest will have no reason to stay here. How could they have guessed that this is the most crucial factor in Xiang Shaolong's plan?

News came that night that the Qin army is near the border and the King of Zhao was so frightened that he hurriedly forced his generals to attack the stockade relentlessly day

and night.

On the 10th day, after suffering heavy losses, the Zhaos finally successfully built three mobile bridges for crossing the moat and moved their ladders in to climb and attack the stockade walls as well as use huge logs to batter the stockade gates.

The Wu family warriors used rocks and fire weapons to return the attack and also used a weapon resembling a long hook to deal with those enemies climbing up, as well as pouring cauldrons of boiling water and oil down. After killing and injuring almost 2000 of their enemies, the Zhaos retreated, only defending the three wooden bridges.

About 50 odd men died and a hundred odd injured on the Wu family's side.

Those injured were immediately transported out of the city.

Only now did Xiang Shaolong truly feel that in a war, one person's strength is so miniscule and to him, it certainly does not feel good.

By the 20th day, the Zhaos finally managed to divert the flow of the water after which they spent another three days to fill up and flatten the moat with soil and rocks. The Wu family stockade has lost its advantage.

The Zhaos launched their attack, pushing the armored battle vehicles used for attacking cities over the flattened moat.

These battle vehicles came in various types with the most formidable being the Climbing City Vehicle, Smashing Vehicle

and Flying Platform.

The Climbing City Vehicle is about as high as the city wall so that the enemy can swiftly reach the top of the walls in the vehicle; the Smashing Vehicle has a sturdy log on it and used to smash continuously on the city gates and walls; the Flying Platform is for the use of the archers to attack the defending soldiers at the top of the walls.

The only way to deal with this is to use huge rocks to attack them.

In less than two days, all the huge rocks have been used up. Xiang Shaolong gave orders to retreat.

By the time the Zhao army entered the city, the whole Wu family stockade has been set ablaze. Because the buildings have all been smeared with oil, they can't extinguish the fire even if they wanted to.

The Zhaos looked on as the fire burned for 10 days and what remained were charred and totally destroyed buildings burnt down to the last tile. They couldn't describe their feelings but in any case, they definitely did not feel good.

More than 8000 Zhaos perished with another 10,000 odd injured. The whole country was in shock.

The Wu family has always enjoyed good reputation among the common Zhao people and now that the King of Zhao had forced them to rebel, there were naturally lots of complaints.

By the time the King of Zhao found out the underground

tunnel leading out of the city from amongst the rubbles and realized that he has fallen for Xiang Shaolong's trick, it's already more than a month later.

Although the King of Zhao was fuming, there was nothing he could do.

At this time he did feel a small sense of regret. Such a capable man like Xiang Shaolong, not only did he not make good use of him, but have now given him away to the Qins. How torturous indeed!

[Continue to Book 2]

ABOUT AUTHOR

Huang Zuqiang (traditional Chinese: 黃祖強; born 1952), better known by his pen name **Huang Yi** (traditional Chinese: 黃易), is a Hong Kong writer of Wuxia and science fiction novels. He graduated from the Department of Fine Arts of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and once worked as the Assistant Chairperson of Hong Kong Museum of Art.



In the 1990s, after the golden age of Wuxia literature, Wuxia literature was increasingly under attack by the general public and was losing its previous aura. However, the emergence of Huang Yi infused new life into the Wuxia genre.

From *Lethal Weapons of Love and Passion* (Chinese: 覆雨翻雲) to *A Step Into The Past* (Chinese: 尋秦記) and to the now popular *Twin of Brothers* (Chinese: 大唐雙龍傳), Huang Yi has combined science fiction with traditional Chinese culture (metaphysics, philosophy, etc) to create a new style of work. Currently, his popularity has resulted in some people describing this phenomenon as flurry of Huang sweeping through China.

Upon conclusion of his longest novel, *Da Tang Shuang Long Zhuan* (*Twins of Brothers*), Huang Yi has commented that he would like to follow in the footsteps of Louis Cha and to revise and improve his released novels.

Source:
Wikipedia.org

LIST OF AUTHOR'S NOVELS

(This list is based on a list found at *shuku.net* dated **15 March 2010**)

NO	TITLE	PUBLISHER (YEAR)	REMARKS
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SERIES:

• YI XIA

- | | | | |
|---|--|----------------------|--|
| 1 | 大唐双龙记 (Da Tang Shuang Long Ji)
Twin of Brothers | | |
| 2 | 寻秦记 (Xun Qin Ji)
A Step Into The Past | Wong Yi Books (2001) | |
| 3 | 大剑师传奇 (Da Jian Shi Chuan Qi)
The Great Swordman | | |
| 4 | 星际浪子 (Xing Ji Lang Zi)
Wanderer of the Cosmos | | |
| 5 | 荆楚争雄记 (Jing Chu Zheng Xiong Ji) | | |
| 6 | 覆雨翻云 (Fu Yu Fan Yun)
Lethal Weapons of Love and Passion | | |

• LING DU YU

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|--|--|
| 7 | 月魔 (Yue Mo) | | |
| 8 | 上帝之谜 (Shang Di Zhi Mi) | | |
| 9 | 兽性回归 (Shou Xing Hui Gui) | | |
| 10 | 诸神之战 (Zhu Shen Zhi Zhan) | | |
| 11 | 光神 (Guang Shen) | | |
| 12 | 圣女 (Sheng Ru) | | |
| 13 | 湖祭 (Hu Ji) | | |
| 14 | 尔国临格 (Er Guo Lin Ge) | | |
| 15 | 浮沉之主 (Fu Chen Zhi Zhu) | | |

• PO SUI XU KONG

16 破碎虚空 (Po Sui Xu Kong)

• XUAN HUAN

17 灵琴杀手 (Ling Qin Sha Shou)

18 超脑 (Chao Nao)

19 超级战士 (Chao Ji Zhan Shi)

20 时空浪族 (Shi Kong Lang Zu)

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